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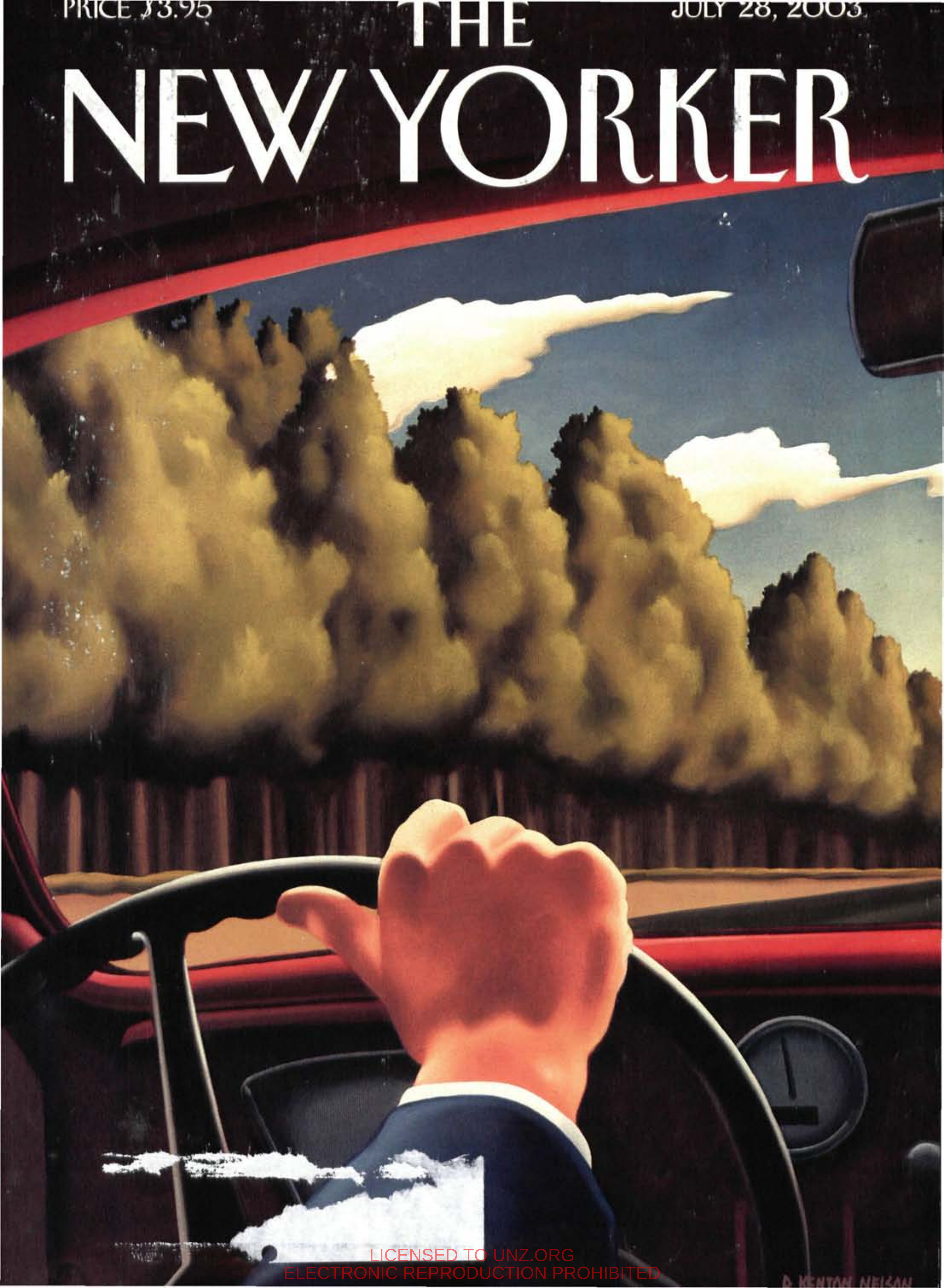
THE NEW YORKER

JULY 28, 2003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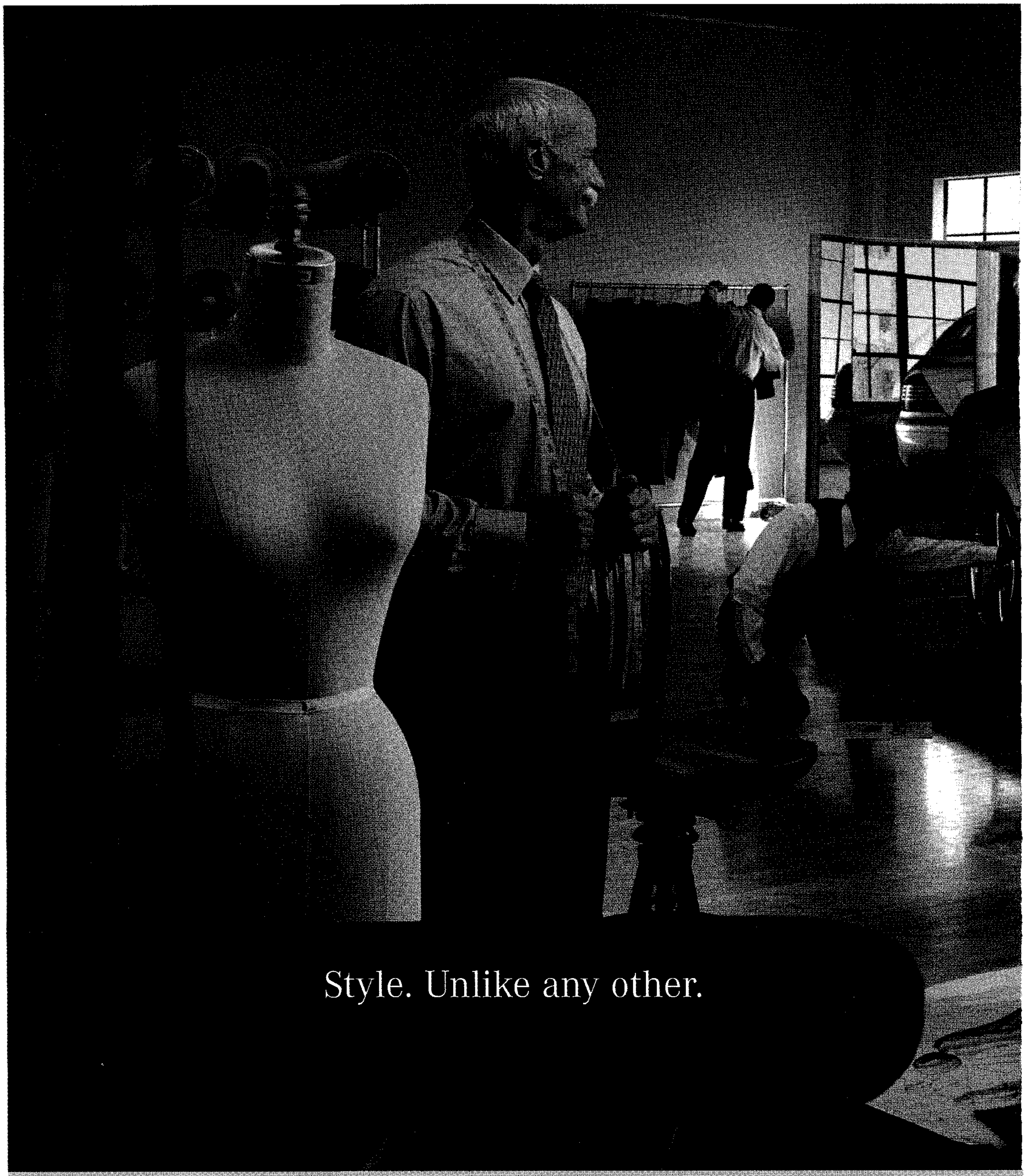
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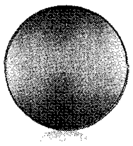

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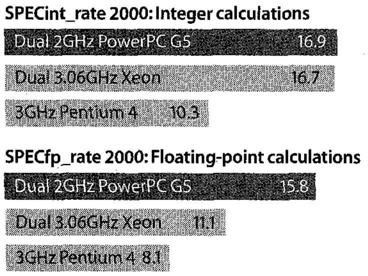

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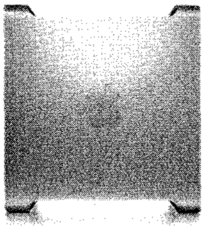

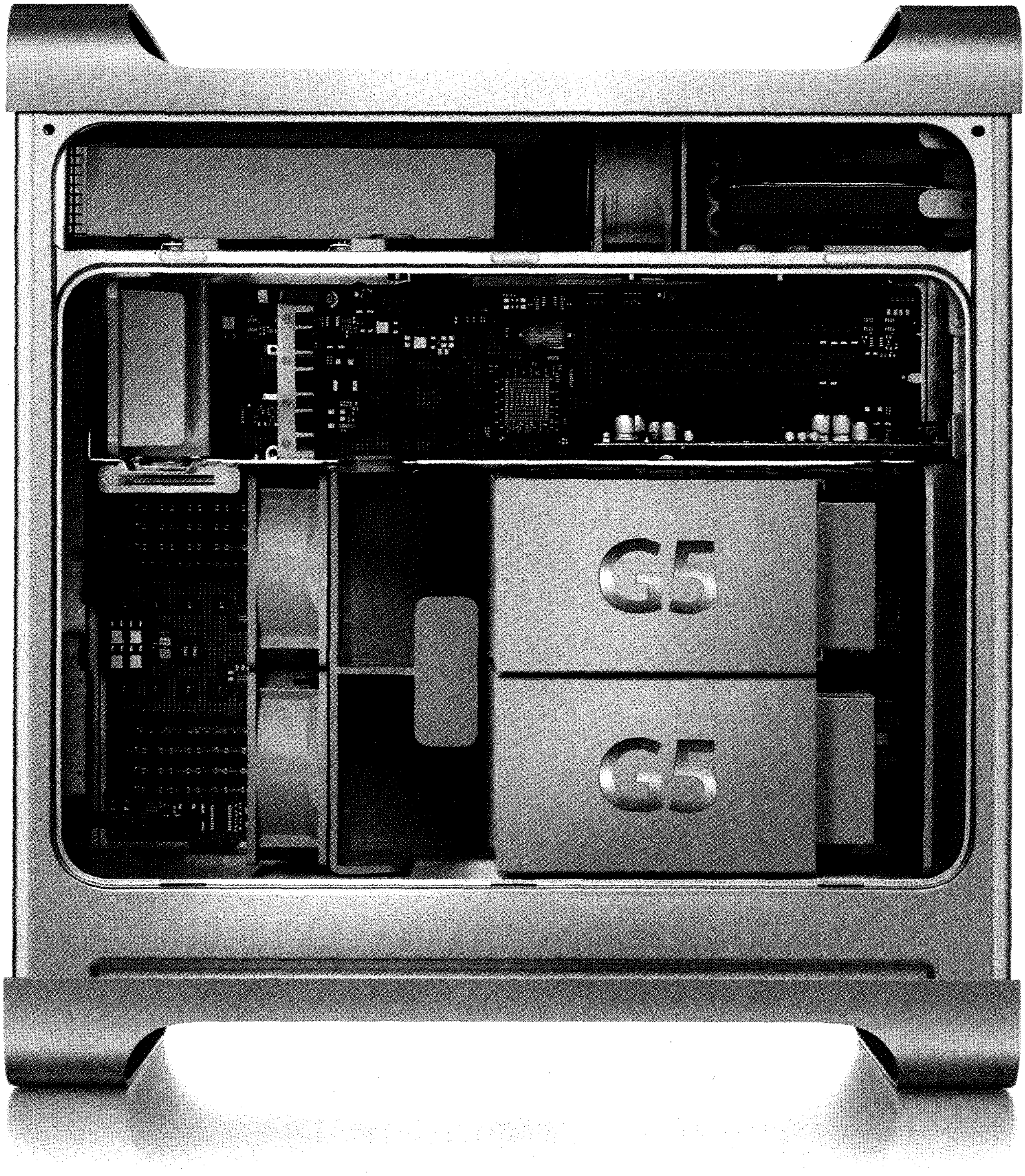

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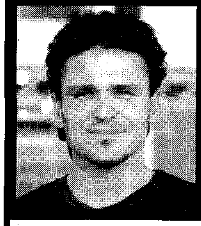

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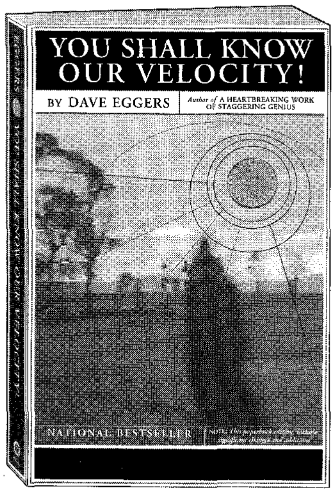

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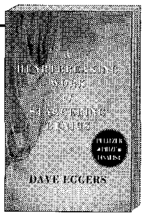

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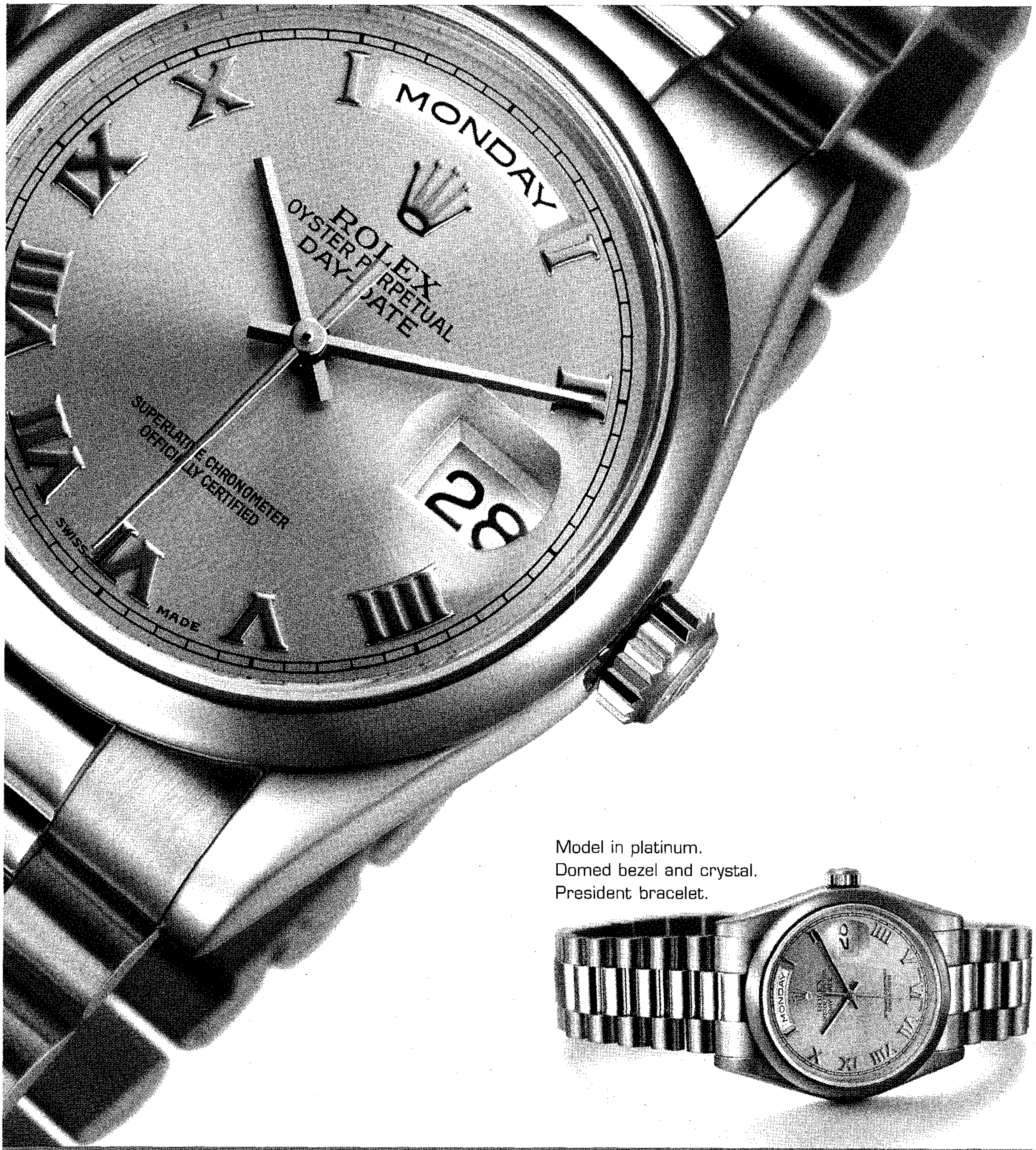
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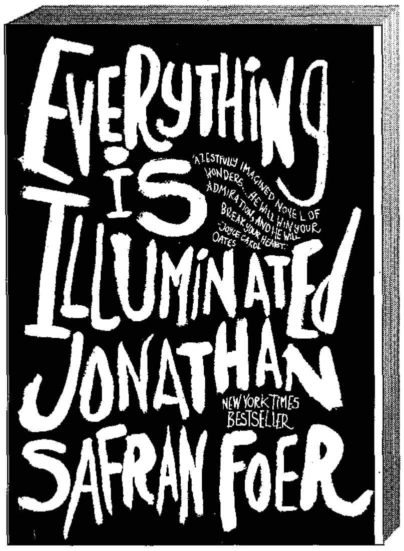
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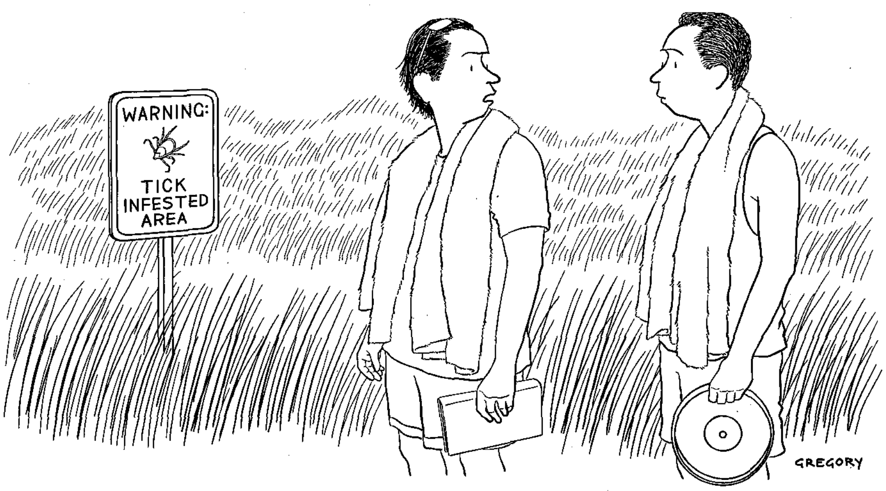

“After the whole W.M.D. thing, I don’t know what *to believe.”*

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THE MAIL

RUMSFELD'S ARMY

Peter Boyer's article about the conflict over the future of the military, in the wake of the invasion of Iraq, was disturbing ("The New War Machine," June 30th). Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld appears determined to transform the Army by making it not just lighter and faster but also more responsive to ideology and politics. By vetting generals on the basis of their political views, Rumsfeld and his allies in the Administration are undermining the Army's traditional values and, more broadly, national security. The Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, was an experienced officer and one of the foremost advocates of the transformation of the Army's forces. But, as Boyer notes, Rumsfeld publicly and repeatedly humiliated him. Rumsfeld turned to the retired list to find Shinseki's replacement. One has to wonder if he did so because qualified active-duty generals simply didn't want to work with him. Who would? An officer's job is tough enough without adding politics.

Francis Hamit
Frazier Park, Calif.

Boyer's examination of Rumsfeld's scheme for making the U.S. armed forces in battle smaller, more mobile, and more reliant on Special Forces and technology would have benefitted from a look back at the Vietnam War, since it bears a striking similarity to the nineteen-sixties doctrine of counterinsurgency. Almost everything Rumsfeld is trying now was tried in Vietnam and in other Third World countries: the Green Beret assassinations and other small-scale operations, the massive bombing, the reliance on high-tech weaponry. And the results sound familiar, too: the constant victory claims, the denials that there is any major fighting going on, the labelling of the opposition as "bandits," the installation of "democratic" leaders (think Diem and Thieu), the talk about there being no need for more troops. The quick takeover of Baghdad has convinced the hawks that the Rumsfeld plan will work. But they should remember that the Soviets quickly took Kabul in 1979, only to face more than a decade of warfare before withdrawing in defeat.

Jonathan Aurthur
Santa Monica, Calif.

KILLING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

In a conversation about the downloading of music from the Internet, Tom Whalley, the head of Warner Bros. Records, complains to John Seabrook, "I think the audience is less loyal today than it used to be" ("The Money Note," July 7th). But the bottom-line management style of companies like his eliminated loyalty from the business long ago. Major labels routinely drop artists whose first record fails to produce a hit—a test that would have eliminated artists such as Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, and Neil Young. Instead of making a long-term investment in a talented artist with the potential to grow and produce decades of inspired music with a loyal fan base, record executives focus on producing a diamond-selling album on the basis of a purposefully bland hit and market saturation.

Rafael Goldberg
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Can the record industry survive? Not in today's form. But do we really need to lament an industry whose best A. & R. people have, as Seabrook writes, a one-in-ten success rate in picking hits? Realistically, for songwriters the future is in licensing, and for performers it's in performing. We'll still need an industry that includes promoters, venues, and video-makers, but we won't need the current stifling system in which ninety-nine per cent of aspiring pop stars don't even get the chance to fail.

Mark Flynn
New York City

•

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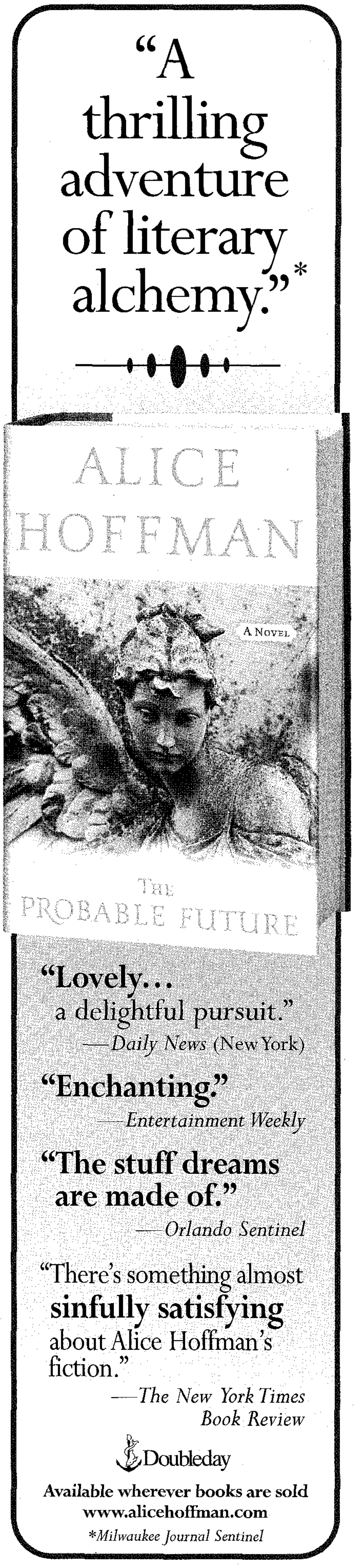

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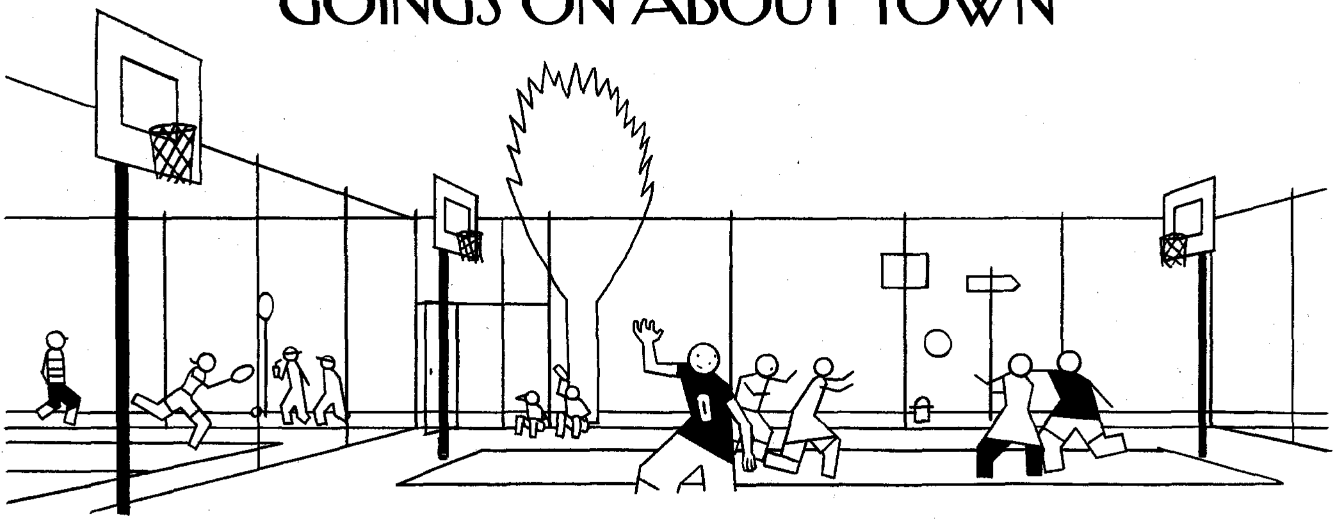

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			23	24	25	26
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AVENUE Q
The joyful and jaundiced hit musical—a teasing update of "Sesame Street" for adults—comes to Broadway. In previews. Directed by Jason Moore. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BIG RIVER
Deaf West Theatre and Roundabout Theatre Company present an adaptation of the musical based on Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," which includes deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing actors, performing in spoken English and American Sign Language. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. Two previews July 23. Opens July 24 at 7. (American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

BLUEPRINT SERIES
The Ontological Theatre presents its annual showcase of work by young experimental-theatre directors. The series opens July 23 at 8 and ends Aug. 3. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.)

FLOP
Philadelphia's Pig Iron Theatre joins the tenth annual Ice Factory theatre festival this week, with a neo-vaudevillian comedy about three time-travelling girls who accidentally break the universe. Opens July 23 at 7; closes July 26. The Ice Factory festival runs through Aug. 16. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 212-966-2844. For complete festival schedule, please call the box office.)

THE ORPHAN OF ZHAO
A new adaptation of the thirteenth-century Chinese play appears in the Lincoln Center Festival, conceived and directed by Chen Shi-Zheng, with a script by David Greenspan, original music by Stephin Merritt, and a mostly Western cast. The traditional version plays nearby, in Mandarin (with supertitles), with a cast of Chinese opera performers. Performances of both versions run July 23-27. (Mandarin version: Clark Studio Theatre, Lincoln Center. English version: LaGuardia Drama Theatre, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St. 212-721-6500.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE ANGEL PROJECT
The British director Deborah Warner startled New York audiences last year by making the strange familiar—turning Medea into a soccer mom who wades through Fisher-Price toys as she slaughters her children. In her ghostly new contribution to the Lincoln Center Festival, a silent walking tour that owes much to Wim Wenders, Warner takes the opposite tack, making the familiar cityscape of New York strange. Each tour-taker picks up an itinerary at an ivy-covered ruin on an island in the middle of the East River, then journeys solo through a series of midtown aeries where telescopes, songbirds, or human "angels" lurk amid rolling lawns of white feathers and a garden of lilies planted in salt. As you walk through the corridors of an abandoned suite of offices, sixty-three stories high—sidestepping sleeping men whose downy wings rise and fall with each breath—strains of Mozart's "Ave Verum Corpus" swell through unseen speakers, and you struggle with two conflicting thoughts: how hokey, and how beautiful. (212-721-6500. Closes July 27.)

CAFÉ A GO GO
The Heather Brothers' musical tribute to swinging London arrives in New York after a decade-long run at London's Strand. (221 W. 46th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE CAPITOL STEPS
The satirical Washington, D.C.-based musical group brings its newest show, "Between Iraq and a Hard Place," to the John Houseman Theatre. (450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

DREAM A LITTLE DREAM
In a play that blends the reverential gusto of a "Loser's Lounge" covers show with a rambling dramatic structure that is part Elaine Stritch and part twelve-step confession, "Papa" Denny Doherty, a founding member of the Mamas and the Papas, reminisces about his group's heyday in Greenwich Village and California and sings their hits in his sweet tenor—backed by a band that includes young doubles for Mama Cass, John Phillips, and the red-hot hippie Mama Michelle. With a video montage of sixties moments by Jan Hartley. Directed by Randal Myler. (Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

EDGE
Angelica Torn is Sylvia Plath in a new play about the poet, set on the last day of her life. Written and directed by Paul Alexander. (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

FLESH AND BLOOD
Cherry Jones and Martha Plimpton lead the cast in a New York Theatre Workshop production of a new play by Peter Gaitens, adapted from the novel by Michael Cunningham and directed by Doug Hughes. (Reviewed in this issue.) (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

GETTING INTO HEAVEN
Cat Venita (Polly Draper) is a fortysomething, multiply pierced, liberally tattooed rock goddess, who's just successful enough to gripe about never having won a Grammy. She's also a lesbian whose lover has just left her, following the death of their son. In the play (which she wrote), Draper expertly portrays what it is to be a woman perpetually on the edge. With an MTV-inspired, multimedia set by Junghyun Georgia Lee and a score by Draper's husband, Michael Wolff. Claire Lundberg directs. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. Closes Aug. 2.)

HENRY V
The Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park offering this summer stars Liev Schreiber and is directed by Mark Wing-Davey. (Reviewed in this issue.) (For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
"All's Well That Ends Well" and "Antony and Cleopatra" play in rotating repertory at Boscobel Restoration. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT
In a stately and compelling production at the Plymouth, Eugene O'Neill's masterpiece has been superbly revived, bringing O'Neill's own spectral, heartbroken family—"the four haunted Tyrones," he called them—to the stage. Vanessa Redgrave and Brian Dennehy play Mary and James Tyrone, and Philip Seymour Hoffman and Robert Sean Leonard are their sons, Jamie and Edmund. Redgrave, lyrical and feral, moves like a trapped animal in a cage of her own choosing. And Hoffman's toxic sorrow in his fight with his brother kicks the play onto a completely new emotional level. Directed by Robert Falls. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/19/03.) (Brooks Atkinson, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

NINE
In this elegant revival of Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston's 1982 musical—an adaptation of Fellini's "8½"—Antonio Banderas plays Guido Contini, a film director whose genius is inextricable from his childlike narcissism. Good-looking, confident, and amusing, Banderas has a European restraint that only magnifies his passionate nature. He also has a fine voice. The other characters are satellites around Planet Guido: his put-upon wife (Mary Stuart Masterson), his battle-axe producer (Chita Rivera), and his tenacious and lubricious mistress, Carla (Jane Krakowski), who descends semi-nude from the rafters. Directed by David Leveaux. (4/21 & 28/03) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

PIECES (OF ASS)
The aggravations that gorgeous women endure get an airing in a show conceived and directed by Brian Howie, which explores "hot-chick angst"

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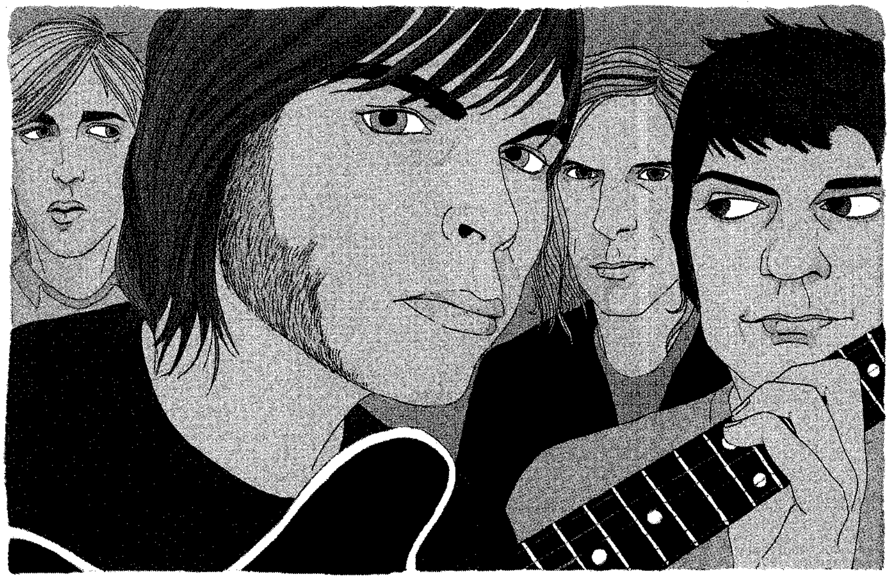
through a series of monologues delivered by a rotating cast of stunners. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-868-4444.)

PRESIDENT HARDING IS A ROCK STAR
In the manic imagination of this show's creator, the blond, impish-kid-brother-faced Kyle Jarrow, President Warren G. Harding wore black leather pants and a shirt ripped open to the navel, snorted coke in the Oval Office with Napoleon and Alexander Hamilton, and belted his stump speech and tariff laws as "Tommy"-esque rock ballads. He also was haunted by visions of a man-size crab that stalked him in his sleep like a rose-colored "Big Fig" Newton with pincers. Uneven but inspired, the show suggests a Tom Lehrer song channelled through an acid trip. Composer and playwright Jarrow hams it up at the piano, as President, groupies, and grifters sing his songs of misguided hope and looming doom. With an energetic young cast, well directed by Alex Timbers, who has a sketch comic's instinct for physical comedy. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. Closes Aug. 3.)



Supergrass plays a pair of shows at Irving Plaza (see Night Life—Clubs).

LARA TOMLIN

TALKING HEADS
In six exquisite cameos translated from television to the stage and divided between two shows, the British actor and playwright Alan Bennett's skills as a miniaturist are on display, and he misses nothing. Each monologue conjures up a desiccated universe with scrupulously observed detail. Kathleen Chalfant is excellent as an alcoholic vicar's wife who has an affair with an Indian shopkeeper in "Bed Among the Lentils," and Lynn Redgrave shines in the show's most memorable monologue, "Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet." With a fluting daftness worthy of Ronald Firbank, she regales us with the story of a woman's unusual liaison with her chiropodist. Directed by Michael Engler. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-1400.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

A BAD FRIEND
Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. (Closes July 27.)

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.

ENCHANTED APRIL
Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. (Closes Aug. 3.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
Baruch Performing Arts Center, 150 E. 25th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Aug. 3.)

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MAN OF LA MANCHA
Al Hirschfeld Theatre, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

THE NOTEBOOKS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI
Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. (Closes Aug. 3.)

OUR LADY OF 121ST ST.
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100. (Closes July 27.)

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.

TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

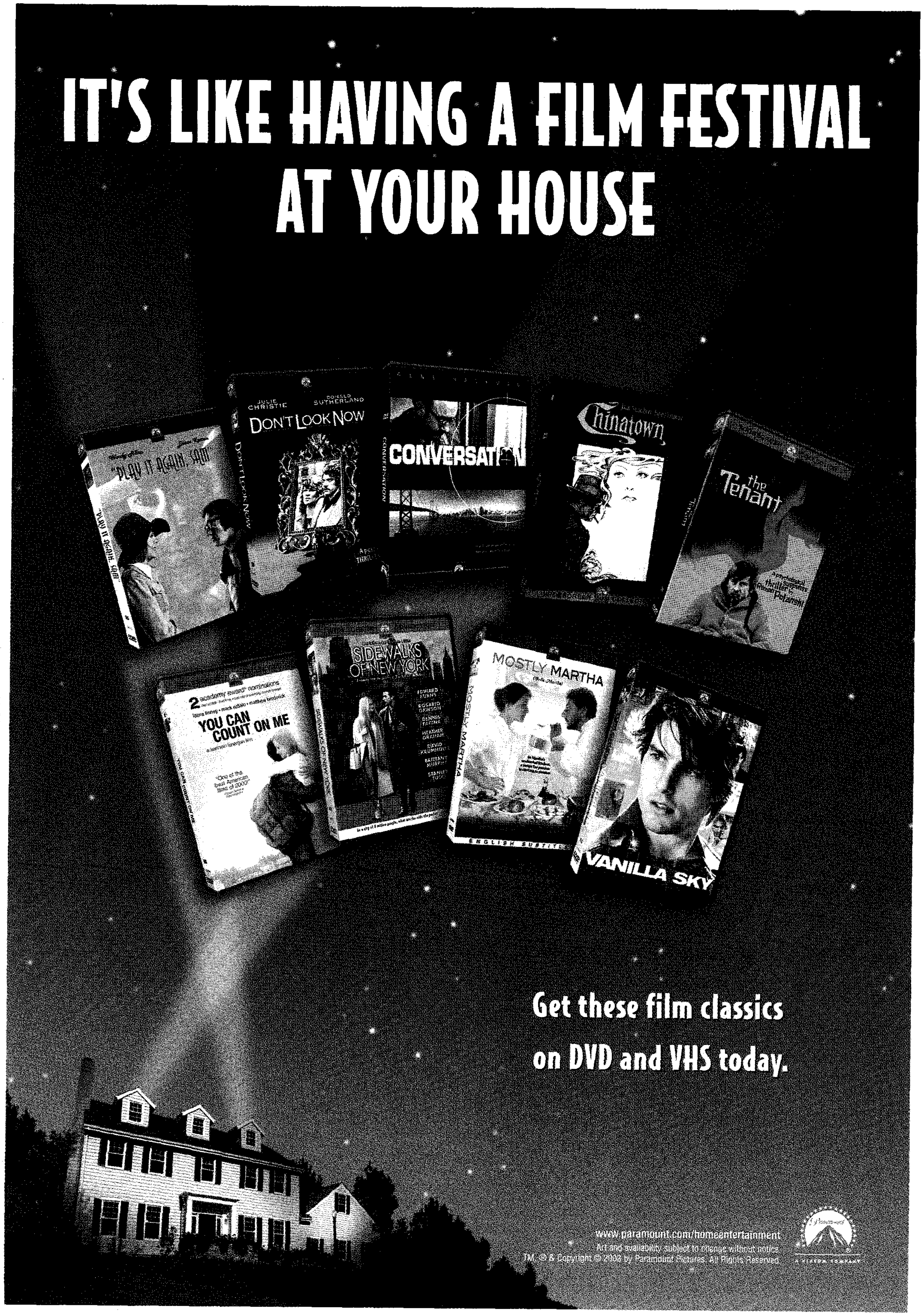
SHEN WEI DANCE ARTS
For "Folding," one of his company's two New York City premières in the Lincoln Center Festival, Shen Wei turns the stage into a vast, dark reflecting pool. Beneath a watercolor backdrop of swimming red and black carp, twelve dancers run with tiny steps in circular patterns, their red skirts rippling as they move. Devotees of yoga will notice that the dancers use an upright version of the fish pose (*matsyasana*) throughout—chests forward, heads back, elbows tucked in at their sides like fins. Every moment is stylized, up to the bows at the end. In his bleak "Rite of Spring," set to a recording of Fazil Say's four-handed piano version of the Stravinsky, the dancers again take tiny steps, but then burst out in agile floor turns, sliding in socks as if on black ice. (LaGuardia Concert Hall, 65th St. at Amsterdam Ave. 212-721-6500. July 23 and July 25-26 at 8.)

BATSHEVA DANCE COMPANY
At the opening of Ohad Naharin's "Anaphaza," dancers in black suits and fedoras perform a vigorous variation on the stadium wave. As a song from the Haggadah plays, they strip to their underwear. In 1998, when the Batsheva Dance Company presented the piece, during Israel's fiftieth-anniversary celebrations, it sparked a culture war between outraged members of the orthodoxy and indignant champions of free expression. In a new context, the piece is unlikely to shock. With the stock features of Tanztheater in the Pina Bausch mode—mixed media, violence set against stillness, and absurdist inscrutability dressed up in arena-rock spectacle—it's the kind of work that invites the audience to participate, without quite answering the question of what, exactly, they are participating in. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. July 23-26 at 8.)

JAZZDANCE
As the name of his Minneapolis-based company indicates, Danny Buraczeski sees his choreography as jazz, and his program at the Joyce displays an expansive definition of that famously slippery term. "Swing Concerto," a company classic, ends with the jazz of Benny Goodman, but not before using the cakewalk and the Lindy to trace its roots in klezmer. In "The Four Seasons," a New York première, the music is by the tango composer Astor Piazzolla and the dancing is a mix of tango partnering and barrel turns sensitive to the score's shifting moods. Buraczeski himself takes the stage in a solo from his new work, "Get Happy! The Judy Garland Project." (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 22 and July 24-25 at 8 and July 23 and July 26 at 2 and 8.)

TWYLA THARP DANCE
In "Movin' Out," her hit Broadway dance show, Twyla Tharp uses the songs of Billy Joel to trace the fallout of the sixties in American culture; the program of her current season at the Joyce recalls her own artistic response to those times. Like most young dancemakers back then, Tharp was trying to strip dance to its essentials. Thus, there's no musical accompaniment for "The Fugue" (1970), just a dance phrase varied by strict rules. Yet unlike many of the era's experiments, it isn't academic. Tharp makes a game of the complexity—the dancers' footsteps are the music. In newer pieces, her inner flower child shows up in a lingering preoccupation with youth. The performers who horse around to Mark O'Connor's Coplandesque score for "Westerly Round" (2001) may look like kids, but they're dancers who can treat virtuoso steps as child's play. That's Tharp's magic, and it animates even the cryptic "Surfer at the River Styx" (2000)—a rave for ballet stars in the underworld with the loveliest self-dismemberment scene in modern dance. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 28-29 at 8. Through Aug. 9.)

"EXPRESSIONS"
Current and former members of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre perform new dances choreographed by Guillermo Asca, Dwight Rhoden, Matthew Rushing, and others, in an evening presented by the Ailey Dancers' Resource Fund. (Ailey Studios, 211 W. 61st St. 212-767-0590. July 25-26 at 8 and July 27 at 3.)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"THE THINNEST WOMAN WITH THE FEWEST WRINKLES WINS"
Dixie Fun Dance Theatre turns the Western woman's lifelong battle with body image into an evening-length dance romp. With a cast of twenty-six, including twenty-five women and one man, who plays a beauty-pageant judge. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. July 24-27 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

"CND2 DANCES"
CND2 is not a movie sequel; it's a new company related to the Compañía Nacional de Danza of Madrid, made up of energetic, classically trained eighteen-to-twenty-one-year-olds, under the direction of Nacho Duato and Tony Fabre (who also direct the parent group). All three ballets in the U.S. première at the Pillow were originally made by Duato for Nederlands Dans Theatre, his old stamping ground. The slate includes his first piece of choreography, "Jardí Tancat" (1983), a sextet set to Majorcan folk songs; "Na Floresta" (1990); and "Duende" (1991), which takes its name from the Spanish word for the soul of Andalusian flamenco but is set to Debussy. The dancers embody the romance and flight of the music with supple ease, lofting on the air to sounds of the flute, or rising in soaring lifts to harp and string. (Ted Shawn Theatre, Jacob's Pillow, Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. July 23-25 at 8, July 26 at 2 and 8, and July 27 at 2.)

BUGLISI/FOREMAN DANCE
The group brings a program of repertory work and one première, "Pollen in the Air," choreographed by Jacqulyn Buglisi to music by Schumann and Sibelius, to the Pillow's Doris Duke Studio Theatre. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. July 24-25 at 8:15, July 26 at 2:15 and 8:15, and July 27 at 5.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"THE SPIRIT OF DJANGO REINHARDT"
A half-century commemoration of the death of the Gypsy jazz-guitar phenomenon brings out a host of players with Gallic swing on their minds including, among many others, **Bireli Lagrene,** the French Gypsy who has probably come closer to Reinhardt's inimitable style than anyone since his passing. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. July 23 at 7.)

MADISON SQUARE MUSIC
Steven Bernstein and his Millennial Territory Orchestra take to the great outdoors. The brassman Bernstein may have been born in the wrong time. This former Lounge Lizard is a fully formed new-jazz modernist, but he also harbors longings for the days when scrappy regional big bands circled the nation, battling each other for momentary supremacy. Bernstein has assembled a beaut of an ensemble, full of such hard-line players as the saxophonist Peter Apfelbaum, the violinist Charlie Burnham, and the bassist Ben Allison. The leader's most pressing problem, it seems, is a lack of healthy competition. (Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. 212-538-5058. July 23 at 7.)

HUDSON RIVER FESTIVAL
July 23 at 7: The Canadian sisters **Kate** and **Anna McGarrigle.** (Rockefeller Park, Battery Park City.) July 24 at 7: The guitarist **Duke Robillard,** one of the founders of Roomful of Blues and a former member of the Fabulous Thunderbirds. (Wagner Park, Battery Park City.) July 24 at 7: When the Austin rockers **Spoon** take the stage, the front man Britt Daniel, he of the bed head and breathy vocals, is undoubtedly the star of the show. But while Daniel provides the swagger and the hip-shimmies, it's the drummer Jim Eno who drives the songs of "Kill the Moonlight," their keyboard- and hand-clap-heavy album, into full-blown syncopated foot-stompers. (Castle Clinton, Battery Park. Free tickets, which are required, will be distributed starting at 5.) July 29 at 7: The adventurous clarinettist **Don Byron** and his twelve-piece Symphony Space Adventurers Orchestra pay tribute to the legacy of the hip-hop label Sugar Hill. (World Financial Center Plaza.) (For more information, call 212-528-2733 or visit www.hudsonriverfestival.com.)

Ansel Adams outside his Carmel studio, photographed by Arnold Newman, at Mann.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING
July 23: Cuban rhythms with the eleven-piece *charanga* orchestra **SonSublime.** July 24: The Eunice, Louisiana, accordionist **Geno Delafose** lays down the zydeco. July 25: **Cliff Korman's Gafieira Dance Club** brings in the sound of working-class Rio. July 26: **Illinois Jacquet** and his big band close out the season's dancing in high style. (Fountain Plaza, Lincoln Center. For more information, call 212-875-5766. All shows are at 7:30, with dance lessons starting an hour earlier.)

DAVE GAHAN
The sonorous voice of the synth-pop mainstay Depeche Mode crooned Martin Gore's lachrymose lyrics of heartbreak and redemption for more than twenty years. Though he was often accused of needless histrionics, Gahan's drug-fuelled history (it includes two heart attacks) informs his own songs with a grave discernment. He's here tonight in support of his confessional solo album, "Paper Monsters." (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. July 23 at 8.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
July 24 at 7:30: The **Alloy Orchestra** presents an original score for the 1926 silent film "The Black Pirate," starring Douglas Fairbanks. July 25 at 8: The **Brooklyn Philharmonic,** with the Broadway vocalist Lillias White. July 26 from 2 to 9: The veteran Zimbabwean guitarist **Oliver Mtukudzi** headlines a day of African music. The undercard includes **Vusi Mahlasela,** a South African singer whose sweet voice and dramatic range recently landed him a deal with Dave Matthews's ATO record label. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

NELLY
The enormously popular St. Louis rapper bounces into town. Expect it to get hot in therre. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-307-7171. July 25 at 7:30.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
July 26 at 3: An afternoon of multicultural global grooves with the **Afro Celts** and **Susheela Rahman,** a sensuous London-born vocalist of Indian descent who is making her U.S. début. July 27 at 5: A celebration of Janis Joplin featuring two of her bands, **Big Brother and the Holding Company** and the **Kozmic Blues Band.** (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

ROXY MUSIC
The suave crooner Brian Ferry and company return for an evening of timeless, dinner-jacket pop. (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. July 25 at 8. ♦ Radio City Music Hall. July 26 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—July 27: **Common.** The sharp-tongued rapper who entered the

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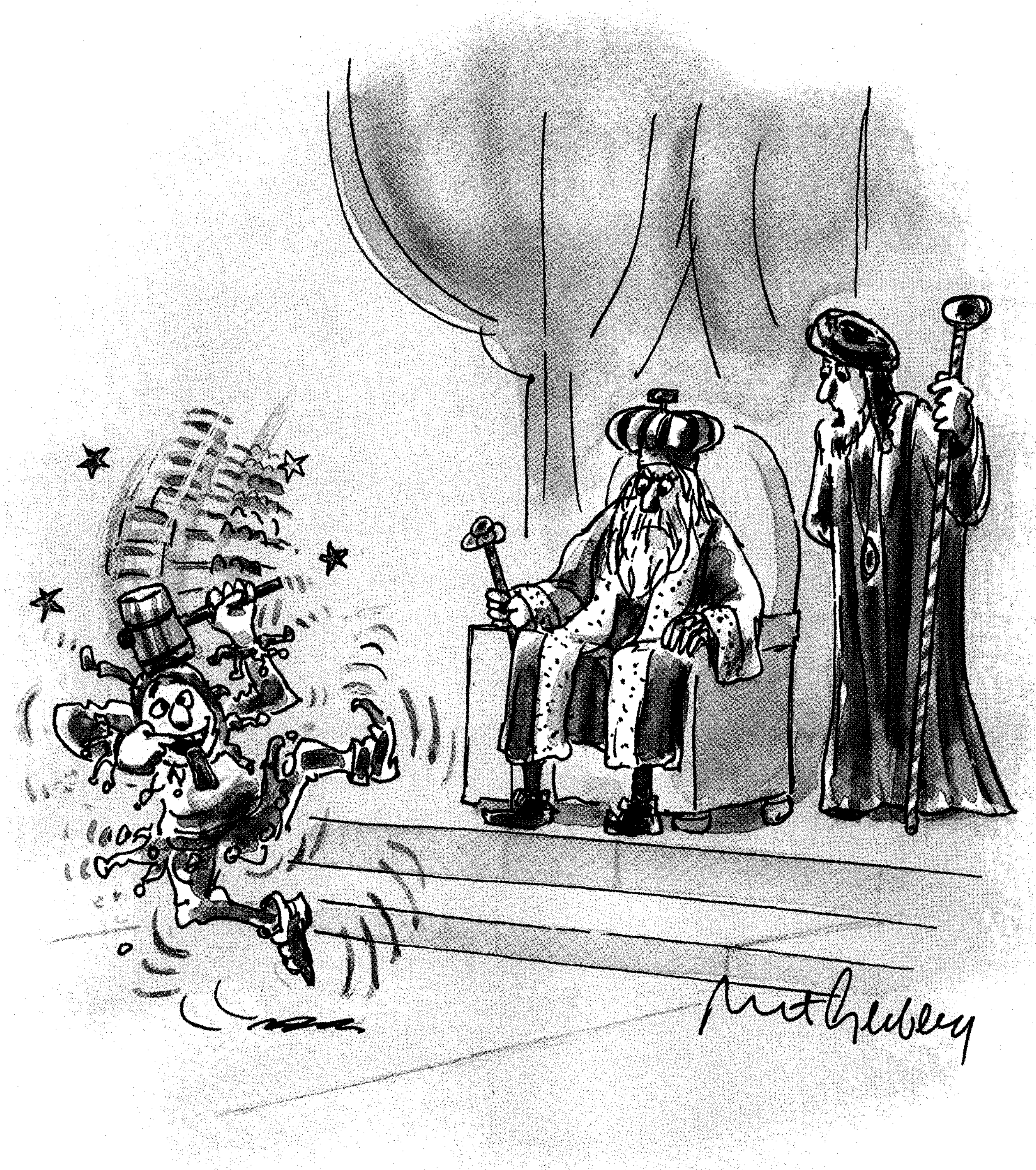

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world as Lonnie Rashied Lynn and first made his mark a decade ago as Common Sense is anything but what his present truncated moniker suggests. His most recent release, "Electric Circus," is a non-stop trip through the imagination of an open-minded musician. Real instruments (electric guitars, keyboards, horns), a slew of guests (Bilal, Mary J. Blige, Erykah Badu), and a slate of producers (James Poyser, Jay Dee, the Roots' ?uestlove, and the Neptunes) conspire in the creation of an ambitious, rich soundscape. Many of the tracks were laid down at Jimi Hendrix's Electric Lady Studios, in the West Village, and it's hard to imagine such twisted and textured songs coming to life anywhere else.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—July 24-25: The **Dismemberment Plan** are part of a dying breed of indie-rock bands—one that knows how to rock. Onstage, the front man Travis Morrison is as loopy, spastic, and hyper-emotive as the music is. It's post-punk you can dance to, and dance you will, but not for long. After a near-decade-long run, the celebrated Washington, D.C., quartet is set to play only a handful more shows in this, their farewell tour, before an amicable dismemberment of their own. July 26: An evening of alt-country harmonizing with **Neko Case, Kelly Hogan,** and **Carolyn Mark.** July 27: The indie popsters in **Rilo Kiley** may toe the line between airy sweetness and twee frothiness, yet there's something in the combination of Jenny Lewis's lilting vocals and Blake Sennett's mellow guitar—perhaps it's the witty banter between them—that melts the hearts of even the most cynical of the black-frame-glasses-wearing set.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—July 28: Welding the funereal gloom of gothic rock with the weighty grind of heavy metal, the boys of **Type O Negative** practice a black-humored blend of dirge-rock that owes as much to "The Munsters" as it does to Black Sabbath. Though they're relentlessly heavy and unwaveringly dark, the band's sense of humor and odd penchant for incongruous cover tunes (they skewered Seals & Crofts's AM-radio staple "Summer Breeze" a few years back) keep the proceedings from becoming overwhelmingly bleak. July 29-30: Initially relegated to B-list status in the early-nineties Brit-pop heyday of Blur and Oasis, **Supergrass** has since morphed from a cuddly trio of punky popsters with a slight affinity for the Monkees into a remarkably capable band. Currently promoting their fourth album, "Life on Other Planets," Supergrass amply prove that they're more than simply the British Green Day.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—During the eighties, back before Los Van Van, the Buena Vista Social Club, and other Cuban bands began their regular tours of the United States, the Cuba native, Yoruba priestess, and San Francisco resident **Bobi Céspedes** and her band Conjunto Céspedes kept *Norte Americanos* moving to the sounds of her homeland. In more recent years Céspedes branched out, working with the likes of the Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart. On July 23 the captivating vocalist stops by with songs from her début solo album, "Rezos." July 25: **Vusi Mahlasela** (see Concerts—Celebrate Brooklyn!).

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—July 24: High-octane punk rock with the **Explosion,** from Boston. July 29: **Champale,** the unusually flexible and inventive ensemble led by the singer-songwriter Mark Rozzo. With the space rock of **Koester.**

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—July 23: **Oliver Mtukudzi** (see Concerts—Celebrate Brooklyn!). July 29: The impassioned Rastafarian reggae vocalist **Luciano.** Dining.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—July 24: The **Whirlwind Heat** may have got a boost from the White Stripes front man Jack White when he signed them to a record deal, but it's the intensity of their organ-driven rock that sets this trio apart. July 25: Nashville's **Legendary Shack Shakers** cook up a wild brew that's two parts rockabilly, one part punk. With the atavistic rock of Detroit's **Hentchmen,** a gang of relatively grizzled vets (they formed way back in 1992) who take their names from a Motor City garage band of the sixties.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (212-777-7745)—July 25: The Austin, Texas, guitarist **Monte Montgomery.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—July 23-26: The **Jon Faddis** quartet. He plays with greater subtlety and lyricism these days, but the still brash former wunderkind trumpeter isn't averse to giving decorum the heave-ho and letting loose a run that aims directly for the stratosphere, reaching it ten times out of ten. Dining.

55 BAR
55 Christopher St. (212-929-9883)—July 28: A promising quartet that's sidestepped the mainstream, **Floriculture** pulls off its new-jazz improvisation and lyrical abstraction with panache.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through July 27: The **Wallace Roney** quintet. Roney is a prodigious trumpeter who has shared the stage with both Ornette Coleman and Miles Davis, the latter remaining a key influence. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

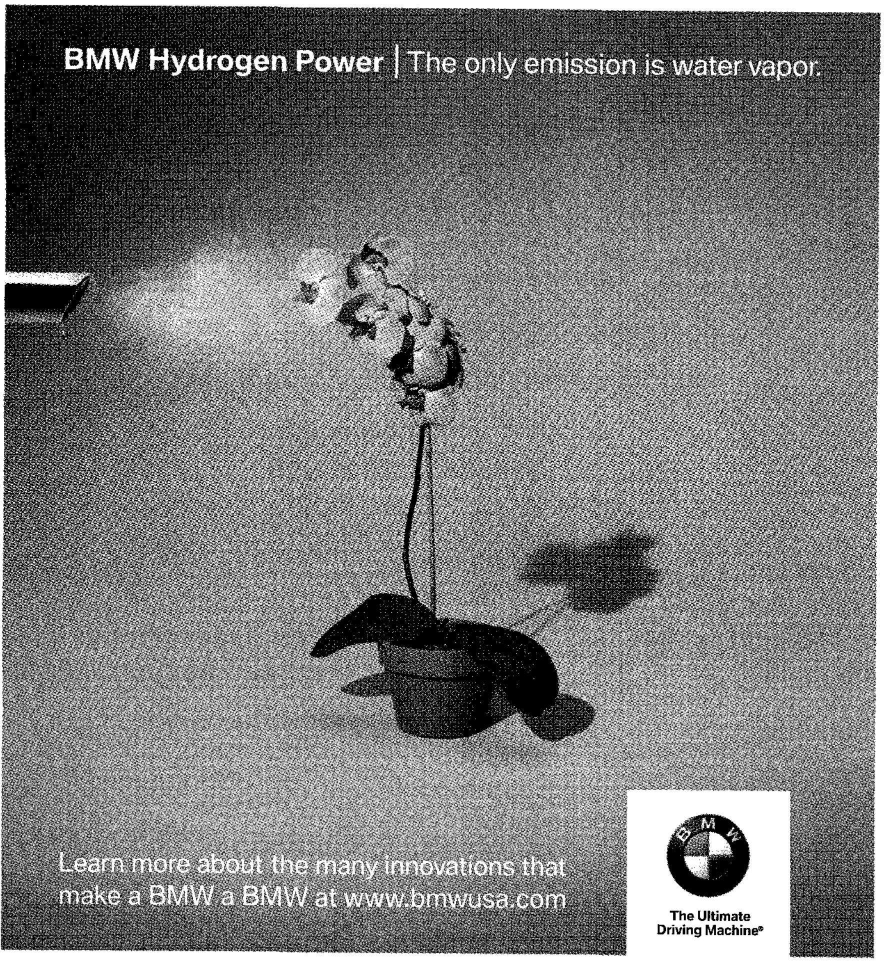
JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—July 24: The **Fieldwork** ensemble features the spiky new-jazz lyricism of the ingenious pianist and composer Vijay Iyer, who, along with the saxophonist Aaron Stewart and the drummer Elliot Humberto Kavee, collaborated on the acclaimed "Your Life Flashes."

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—July 25-27: With a formidable front line of **Ravi Coltrane** and **Craig Handy,** the "Hornz from the Hood" program favors saxophones over brass. The drummer **Ali Jackson,** the pianist **Tim Armacost,** and the bassist **Bob Hurst** will keep the horn players perched on their toes. July 28: Steven Bernstein's **Millennial Territory Orchestra** (see Concerts). Dining.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—July 23: The guitarist **Joel Harrison** doesn't filter out any apparently clashing influences when it comes to his own music. His new "Free Country" is just that: a bracing mélange of jazz, rock, world music, and country that strives to mess with any preconceptions of genre. Just don't expect Norah Jones, who makes a special guest appearance on the album, to pop her pretty little head into the gig.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—July 23-24: **Jeremy Pelt,** an aggressive young trumpeter with a growing reputation, leads his Creation band, featuring the equally aggressive young saxophonist **Myron Walden.** July 25-26: The drummer **Bobby Sanabria,** the man you call when you need authentic Latin jazz rhythms, leads his own quartet. Sundays feature classic swing with the **Frank & Joe Show.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through July 27: The **Mark Turner–Ethan Iverson** quartet. Turner, a tenor saxophonist whose unlikely blend of influences, from cool school to sixties expressionist, has afforded him a distinct instrumental voice, is lately taking new roads. For years he's been heard in tandem with the guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel; here Turner mixes it up with the imaginative pianist of Bad Plus Trio fame, a welcome change that can only set Turner's prodigious talents in greater relief. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.



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ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—Viewers who didn't get enough Manet with their Velázquez can take solace in several seascapes inspired by an American Civil War battle waged off the coast of France. (Before becoming a painter, Manet sailed to Brazil on a cargo ship; he enrolled in art school after twice failing the Naval Academy entrance exam.) On June 19, 1864, the Confederacy's most successful raider, the C.S.S. Alabama, was sunk two hours after it launched a sneak attack on the U.S.S. Kearsarge. Manet painted the battle from imagination (abetted by news reports), then travelled to Boulogne-sur-Mer to paint a portrait of the victorious ship anchored there. Also on view are works by Whistler, Courbet, and Monet (all inspired by Manet), not to mention the captain's log and an elaborate model of the Kearsarge. Through Aug. 17. ♦ Charles Sheeler's photographs, on display in an elegant survey, found Precisionist geometry in the flying buttresses of Chartres Cathedral and the blast furnaces of the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge plant. Through Aug. 17. ♦ **"Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus."** Through Aug. 17. ♦ After witnessing the atrocities of the First World War as a medic, the German painter Max Beckmann took up Expressionism to "reproach God for his errors." The museum recently acquired the famous "Hell" portfolio, eleven black-and-white lithographs that chronicle Beckmann's visit to Berlin in 1919 during the March Rebellion, when twelve hundred people were killed in two days. The original owner of the portfolio, the industrialist Hugo Stinnes, appears in a stinging caricature as a puppeteer dangling a marionette emperor, surrounded by human skulls and sacks of cash. This series' masterly balance between chaotic and carnivalesque is an amuse-bouche for the retrospective of the artist currently at MOMA QNS. Through Aug. 31. ♦ A playful roof-garden sculpture—a painted aluminum cottage with a red roof, white and yellow walls, and a blue chimney—by Roy Lichtenstein, the late Pop artist, sits on its own little lawn with a sign warning viewers to keep off the grass. Through Nov. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

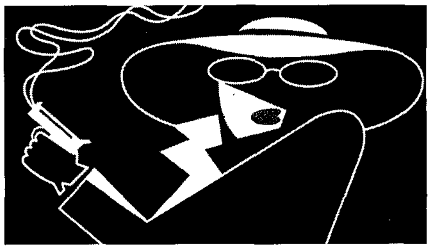
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—To mark the centenary of the birth of Ansel Adams (1902-84), the museum presents more than a hundred photographs, including some unexpected choices, by the scrupulous Western artist. Through Nov. 3. ♦ This succinct retrospective tests Max Beckmann's long-pending claim to parity with the modern masters of Paris. The curator Robert Storr's trenchant selection and airy hanging make a winning case. How does one look at art that is laden with elusive, often quite lugubrious portent? The show's answer: as painting. Beckmann's manipulations of aggressive, theatrical space are dazzlingly supple. The trick, for the viewer, is to receive the pictures passively, letting their organization declare itself. Even, or especially, when its imagery is gnarled and bizarre, a great Beckmann attains startling unity, notably through making light-dark modelling inseparable from warm-cool color. Depth and surface become one. Beckmann does all the work: our role is to be bowled over. Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Andy Warhol: Screen Tests,"** twenty-eight selections from the artist's series of portraits on film—lingering 16-mm. shots of various subjects. Through Sept. 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism"** is a concise, bewitching show of paintings, drawings, and sculptures—many of them making their first trip outside Russia. Through Sept. 7. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—In **"The American Effect,"** forty-seven artists and filmmakers

BOOK CURRENTS
Agent XX7

The image of the seductive female agent frightened and fascinated people even before Mata Hari faced a French firing squad, in 1917. Not only did it tap into fears about women's treachery, but it added a more dangerous and romantic dimension to the traditional government-intelligence bureaucracy. In **FEMALE INTELLIGENCE: WOMEN AND ESPIONAGE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR** (N.Y.U.), Tammy Proctor attempts to rescue female spies from clichés that classed them as either sexual predators or martyred virgins, manipulators or dupes, heartless vamps or emotional basket cases.

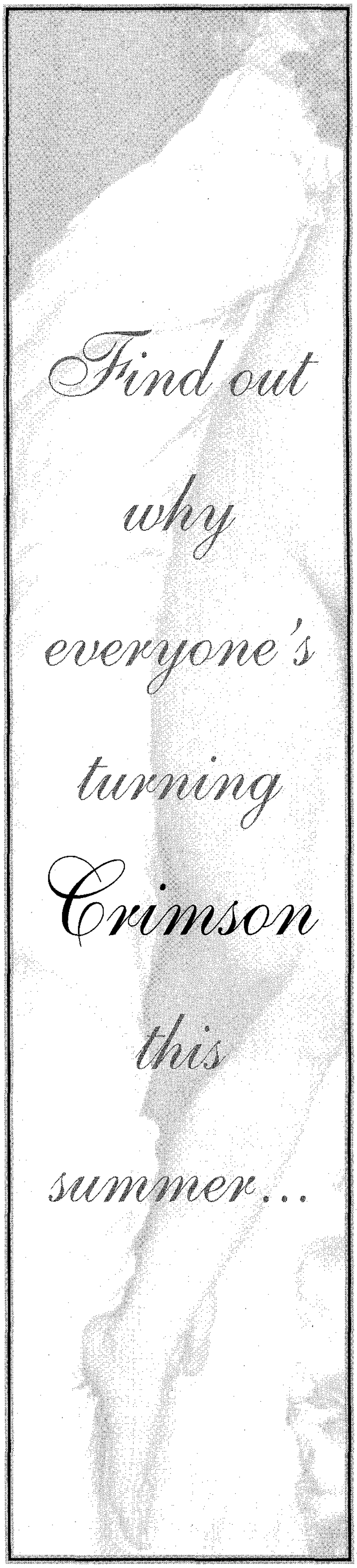


RICHARD McGUIRE

Elizabeth Bentley, the subject of Lauren Kessler's **CLEVER GIRL: ELIZABETH BENTLEY AND THE DAWN OF THE MCCARTHY ERA** (HarperCollins), fell into the latter camp—more a depressive than a femme fatale. A Communist spy while her K.G.B. lover was alive, Bentley came clean to the F.B.I., which led to the first of the McCarthy-era witch-hunts. Later in life, lonely and alcoholic, she was reduced to supporting herself with speaking fees and an overwrought memoir.

The anonymous author of **TERRORIST HUNTER: THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF A WOMAN WHO WENT UNDERCOVER TO INFILTRATE THE RADICAL ISLAMIC GROUPS OPERATING IN AMERICA** (HarperCollins) an Iraqi-born Jew, has spent years disguising herself to attend Muslim rallies and conferences. When she was a child, her father was executed by Saddam Hussein as an alleged Israeli agent—a trauma she thinks led her into the spy game. But she's aware of the equivocal nature of her profession: lecturing a pair of F.B.I. agents, she is delighted to see them dumbfounded at her competence; earlier, she says, "they'd been ogling me."

—*Kate Taylor*



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TABLES FOR TWO

IDA MAE KITCHEN-N-LOUNGE
111 W. 38th St., at Broadway (212-704-0038)—There aren't all that many fancy restaurants in the fashion district—some upscale sandwich shops and a Korean-barbecue joint or two—so Kenneth W. Collins's new place stands out improbably like an oasis of blue velvet, chiffon, and crystal. The spacious restaurant, which has acoustics that make quiet conversation possible everywhere, is divided into a long, modern bar, a curtained central lounge that recalls the inside of the "I Dream of Jeannie" bottle, and an airy, rather opulent dining room. "I was thinking of those Georgia-style mansions with chandeliers hung everywhere, and a cast-iron fan in every room," Collins says.

But Collins doesn't come from Georgia; he was raised in Texas by his great-grandmother Ida Mae. She was the person who first got him cooking. When he was seven, she had him lug home a freshwater bass that was bigger than he was, clean it, and serve it up for the family. "She told me, 'Never depend on a woman to cook for you,' " he says. He took the lesson seriously, and went on to study French and nouvelle cuisine with Paul Bocuse and Peter Schaffrath, in London and Dallas. Still, when he opened his Manhattan restaurant last month, he dipped into his Southern repertoire for the menu. "You know the way it is nowadays," a waitress at Ida Mae says. "It's down-home. But high-end."

The result is smoky-sweet Southern comfort food dressed up with well-judged French-nouvelle flourishes. Sweet-potato stuffing fills ravioli rounds in a chive beurre blanc; sautéed cremini, chanterelle, and oyster mushrooms balance between cracker-like platforms of baked pasta. The Chilean sea bass cured in brown sugar lies on a bed of dirty rice and stewed tomatoes, and the pork *tostaditas* are presented in generous tapas-style portions. "My great-grandmother could not have cooked this food," Collins says. "But then, I'm the one who did the cooking." (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner and Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $23-$27.)

—*Liesl Schillinger*

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react to the myths and policies of the United States. Through Oct. 12. ♦ Louise Bourgeois did most of the two hundred and twenty pen and pencil drawings in **"The Insomnia Drawings"** between November, 1994, and June, 1995, during a prolonged stretch of sleeplessness. The work, she says, is "a kind of rocking or stroking and an attempt to find a kind of peace. Like rocking a baby to sleep." Casting her own psyche as a fretful and voracious infant is vintage Bourgeois strategy, and the drawings—mostly in red ballpoint, with an emphasis on circles, spirals, looming buildings, and abstracted visages—are as twitchy and hallucinatory as you might fear. Through Sept. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 11 to 9.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (212-217-5800)—Hand screen-printing—a stencil-like method involving pigment or a dye-tipped squeegee passing over a pattern cut into a tautly stretched mesh surface—became popular in the early twentieth century and proved valuable decades later in making bold color-saturated patterns in limited editions. **"The Big, the Bold, and the Beautiful: Hand Screen-Printing for Fashion and Interiors"** offers finery from couture (a silk organza Pierre Cardin evening gown sweetly colored like Starburst candies) to the disposable (two sixties paper dresses by Mars of Asheville covered in recognizable corporate logos) and affirms both the artistic and commercial applications of the process. Through Aug. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

GROLIER CLUB
47 E. 60th St. (212-838-6690)—Perhaps **"The Auroral Light,"** the nebulous title (pinched from a Dickinson poem) of this exhibition, is meant to suggest that photographs taken by women all glow with a heavenly ease. While some of the hundred and thirty prints by eighty photographers here do radiate (most notably Louise Dahl-Wolfe's sun-soaked homage to the female form), the most captivating of them are significantly darker in meaning and composition. Sandy Skoglund's terrifying photolithograph "Babies at Paradise Pond" depicts a world overwhelmed by Silly Putty-colored infants, and Carrie Mae Weems's poker-faced subject in "Black Woman with Chicken" looks like the saddest girl ever to hold a drumstick. Through Aug. 2. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (212-219-1222)—**"Black President"** surveys the life of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, the extravagantly stoned musician and cultural force who invented Afro-beat, imported an American-style black-power movement to Nigeria, and married twenty-eight women (all but one of them in a single Yoruba ceremony). For many of the artists here, Fela's artistic, activist, and sexual personae provide excellent source material, and for the curators, it's an excuse to exhibit many more whose work shares those themes, like Iké Udé, whose parody of a *Vogue* cover features two topless models: a woman and a drag queen. A loop of several short films is nearly an African travelogue—straight shots of bus stops, record shops, and an old woman working in the kitchen. Through Sept. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

"GIVERNY"
At first glance little connects the fifteen American artists in this show except the fact that each spent a summer working in Monet's garden at Giverny. Despite the occasional low point (the nadir is Will Cotton's insipid painting of a landscape made of flan), there are plenty of revelations. Miranda Lichtenstein's large-scale photograph of leaves against a twilight sky mimics the garden by turning landscape to still-life and nature to artifice. Freshest of all are Rachel Urkowitz's acrylic flowers, a sculptural riff on Monet's water lilies by way of Jeff Koons's inflatable blossoms. Through Aug. 13. (Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.)

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

EDWARD KRASINSKI
A powerful installation by a Polish artist last seen in New York in 1967. A horizontal stripe of blue tape runs along the gallery walls and across mirrors suspended from the ceiling—they look like they're floating in space. This simple device (aided by two reductive paintings the artist calls interventions) has an elegiac impact. From certain vantage points, viewer and installation are united, thanks to reflection. But the backs of the mirrors are blank (though also lined with blue tape), so from another perspective the room is punctuated by absence. Through Aug. 1. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

JESSICA ROHRER
Rohrer's compact portraits of the places she has lived, from a ranch house in Kewaskum, Wisconsin, to an apartment building in Brooklyn, suggest a cross between Charles Sheeler and Robert Bechtle, with each brick, branch, and hydrant exactingly rendered. Reflection plays a starring role and in the best paintings, two portraits of Rohrer's college dormitory, trees flicker in carbon-blue win-

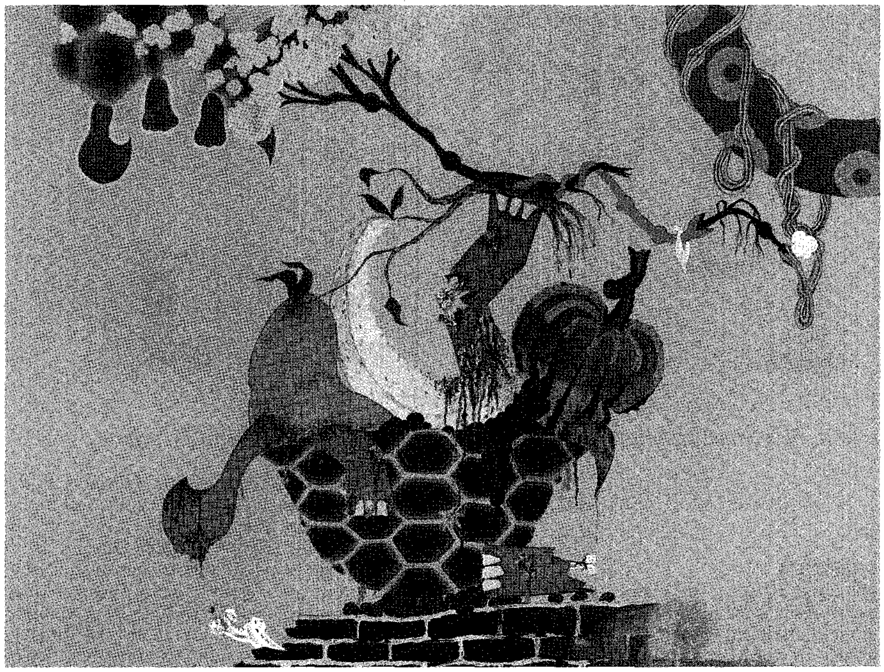
dows like rows of tiny Alex Katz still-lifes. Through July 31. (Arena, 526 W. 26th St. 646-734-2261.)

"FAMILY CIRCUS"

Ryan Bartley's take on *nature morte*, that old standard of bloody game, half-eaten produce, and hovering flies, is a darkly imagined but brightly, even recklessly, colored scene of an upended turtle, broken limbs dangling and belly piled high with gourds, bordered above by a serpent twined around a branch. Its surprising companion piece is a soft watercolor called "One and All," a bundle of clouds and twigs—or is it woolly sheep with legs akimbo? Neil Farber, Daniel Heimbinder, and Taylor McKimens also hover between prettiness and a snake-snail-puppy-dog-tail aesthetic, most happily when "South Park" meets "The Gashlycrumb Tinies" in Farber's untitled watercolors of morbid, spherical-headed children with lavender shadows under their eyes. Through Aug. 1. (Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-5937.)

"THE MILKING STOOL"

The traditional Swiss milking stool—a disk with a wooden leg and a leather strap that's worn around the waist—provides a seat whenever needed. This show, with its tongue-in-cheek rethinking of the oddly perfect design, displays forty-three stools made by Swiss designers and university students from Lausanne. Matali Crasset offers a two-seated kind of toadstool, with a tiny extra seat for a little frog, perhaps. Alexis Georgacopoulos creates one that accommodates a derrière and a bowl of cereal. And for the fully wired farmer, Pierre-Yves Dubois makes a stool with a built-in joystick. Through July 31. (Gasser and Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 212-807-9494.)



"Still Life, Moving," by Ryan Bartley, part of the "Family Circus" show at Clementine.

"PARKING LOT"

None of the works in this playful, if uneven, show make literal reference to the title. The lot conjured by Carol Jackson's crisscrossed strings of triangular banners (they spell out lines from the Iliad) is more used car than parked car. Jesse Bercewetz invokes the automotive (not to mention "The Incredible Hulk") in his ramshackle black tollbooth sprouting a massive green arm. Matthew Brannon's handsome graphic works, posters promoting wine and dim sum, suggest that if drinking and driving don't mix, drinking and parking just might—tailgating has never looked more elegant. Through July 25. (Ten in One, 526 W. 26th St. 212-604-9660.)

"SUBTLE OCCUPATION"

Gadding about, lounging, killing time: the title of this group show appears to refer to a cheerful slackerdom that finds expression in (and is saved from total narcissism by) quirky attention to materials. Thus Francis Cape's bright-yellow, wall-mounted cabinet door, which has no handle, Matthew Higgs's found bits of books, and Shirley Tse's strangely anthropomorphic sheet of cut pink vinyl suggest hobbies gone wrong. Through Aug. 1. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

GALLERIES—SOHO

"SUMMER PROGRAM"

Apex Art's summer invitational, a garage band's fantasy clubhouse of a show, includes Kaz Oshiro's 3-D sculpture-paintings in the shape of Fender amps, John Dogg's sculptures mimicking drum sets and go-cart parts, and Nate Lowman's wall of posters, photos, and drawings celebrating radical dudes from Jesus to Che Guevara and Kurt Cobain. The crowd-pleaser, though, is sure to be Roberto Cuoghi's animated video, which produces a wacky series of exquisite corpses by grafting the Simpsons' heads onto the bodies of characters from "Peanuts," "The Flintstones," "Scooby-Doo," et al. Through July 26. (Apex Art, 291 Church St. 212-431-5270.)

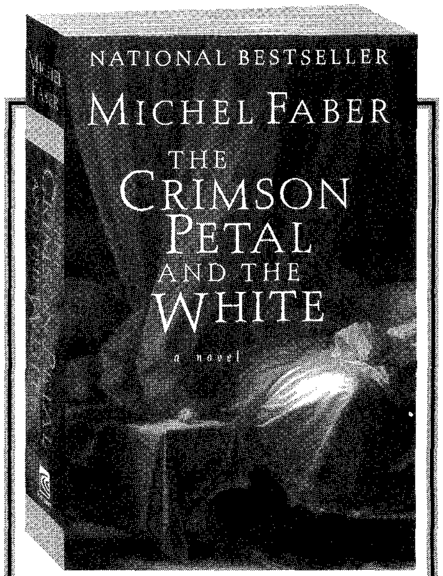
GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

MIREILLE LOUP & PAUL POUVREAU

Loup's digitized slide show "Une Femme de Trente Ans" chronicles a woman's sexual awakening and subsequent disappearance. The script riffs on Balzac's novel of nearly the same name, and is more interesting than the accompanying stills of a handsome actress eating croissants or walking around Paris. Paul Pouvreau's photographs, meanwhile, show men engaged in indefinable but strenuous-looking odd jobs—if all this sad-sack Adam does is mess around with cardboard boxes, it's no wonder that Loup's heroine absconded. Through July 28. (Roebling Hall, 390 Wythe Ave. 718-599-5352.)

"SCHOOL IS OUT"

This group show curated by the avant-garde filmmaker Michel Auder mixes quirky portraiture by the likes of Cindy Sherman and Alice Neel with chic, conceptually weighted abstraction by relative newcomers. There are rock-shaped plastic stools by Yvette Brackman, a sort of minimalist-hippie candle sculpture by Virgil Marti, and a digital print by Jeremy Blake that suggests both stained glass and the basement rec room. An after-school hang-out vibe



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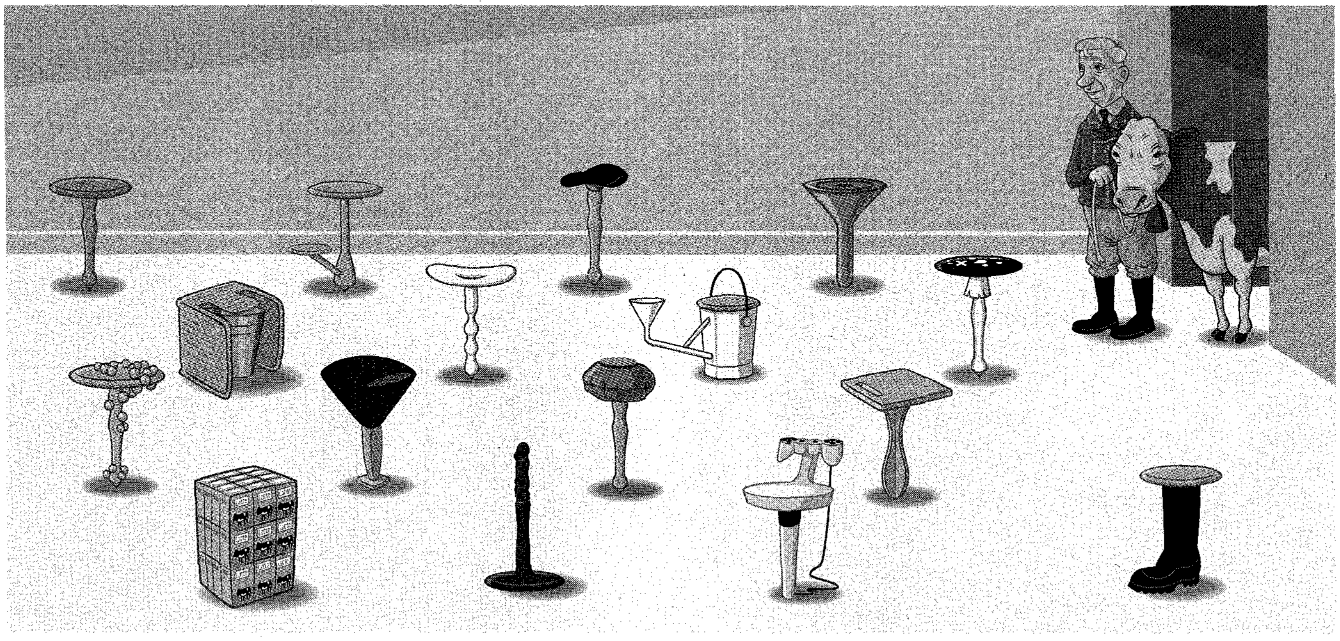
figures prominently, though Auder couldn't resist joining in with his own short, cool film "Bob Rauschenberg Opening at Castelli, 1970." Through Aug. 3. (Southfirst, 60 N. 6th St. 718-599-4884.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

ANSEL ADAMS

In conjunction with MOMA QNS's "Ansel Adams at 100" show, the Adams scholar Andrea Stillman presents the slightly more accurate "100 + 1"—both shows are meant to mark the centenary of the photographer, who was born in 1902. Stillman includes early work, Adams's first portfolio, and his only series ("Surf Sequence"), as well as such masterworks as "Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941" and "Clearing Winter Storm, Yosemite, 1944." Through Aug. 22. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 212-989-7600.)



Designers from Lausanne present updated versions of a Swiss standard, in "The Milking Stool," at Gasser and Grunert.

MICHAEL WELDON

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Cuba on the Verge."** Abelardo Morell, who left Cuba with his family forty years ago, when he was fourteen, is well known for his camera-obscura images of cityscapes and industrial areas, flipped and fuzzy on apartment and hotel walls. His exposures last up to eight hours, and pictures made on a recent trip to Cuba carry an emotional weight, a sense of loss and of feeling trapped, at which his other work can only hint. Other photographers, like Virginia Beahan and Carrie Mae Weems, reach similar heights, whether looking at history or Afro-Cuban identity. The show also gives the opportunity to see work by other, lesser-known Cuban artists, notably Manuel Piña's lushly colored crumbling walls in Havana, Abigail Gonzáles's images of sexual joy, and René Peña's black-and-white pictures of handwritten letters sent by Cubans to family members abroad, often asking for financial assistance. Through Aug. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

"THE BOYS OF SUMMER"

A whiff of the illicit—or is it just the homoerotic?—hovers over this good-natured, giggly show, in which the men are mostly white, cute, and muscular. While Mel Roberts' witty, buoyant Technicolor pictures of Southern California beach bunnies (hopping down to the beach, hoisting themselves out of sparkling pools) capture all the giddy delights of being young during summertime, it's not all high camp. PaJaMa's small, intimate black-and-whites of men (the artists George Tooker and Paul Cadmus) against what appear to be bleak, barren landscapes (actually, Provincetown and Fire Island) are both haunting and lovely, and Tom Atwood's portrait of the clothing designer John Bartlett at home has a refreshing clarity and modesty. Bill Jacobson's elegiac blurred portraits are an oddly cerebral, but welcome, inclusion. Through Sept. 6. (ClampArt, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.)

Short List

JAMEL SHABAZZ
Kravets/Wehby, 521 W. 21st St. 212-352-2238.
Through Aug. 15.

"BY THE SEA"
Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.
Through July 31.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S

July 25 at 10 A.M.: This auction of entertainment memorabilia is the sort of event where you can immerse yourself in the daily life of your favorite stars, from Marilyn Monroe to George Harrison to Clark Gable. Bank checks and snapshots share the stage with handwritten song lyrics, costumes, and the star of the show, Orson Welles's 1941 Academy Award for Best Screenplay for "Citizen Kane." Among the Monroe items are a sepia print of the nine-year-old Norma Jean, her beautiful, almond-shaped eyes the only hint of the bombshell she would become, and a sad, largely empty appointment book from the last year of her life; other treasures include forty minutes of silent, never-before-seen 16-mm. footage of John Lennon gambolling around New York City in 1974. And for the thrifty cinephile, there are posters galore, including a German advertisement for "The Seven Year Itch" (or, rather, "Das Verflixte 7.Jahr"), signed by Billy Wilder, and a poster of Truffaut's lovely (and lethal) Catherine laughing with abandon as Jules and Jim run after her. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS IN TOWN

INTERNATIONAL KEYBOARD INSTITUTE

Over seventy young pianists from around the world come to the Mannes College of Music every summer to attend this institute and festival, which features a series of lectures, master classes, and concerts that are open to the public. July 23 at 8: Idil Biret, the doyenne of the Naxos label's piano catalogue (where her repertory stretches from Bach to Boulez), offers a recital of Brahms (the "Paganini" Variations), Stravinsky, and Ravel. ♦ July 24 at 8: The Beaux Arts Trio performs music by Beethoven, Ravel, and Brahms (the Piano Trio in B Major); the concert will include an interview with the group's renowned pianist, Menahem Pressler. ♦ July 26 at 8: Abbey Simon closes the festival with a program of Schumann and Chopin (the Sonata in B Minor). (150 W. 85th St. 212-580-0210, ext. 336.)

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL: KIROV OPERA

Two performances of Verdi's **"Macbeth,"** in a production by David McVicar, are featured in the final week of the legendary company's residency at the Met. Olga Sergeeva and Irina Gordei, respectively, alternate in the role of Lady Macbeth; the conductor is Mikhail Sinkevich, taking over for his workaholic boss, Valery Gergiev. (July 23 at 7:30 and July 26 at 12:30.) ♦ **"Eugene Onegin,"** with Tatiana Pavlovskaya, Ekaterina Semenchuk, Yevgeny Akimov, and Vassily Gerello; Tugan Sokhiev conducts. (July 24 at 7:30.) ♦ With Irina Mataeva replacing Pavlovskaya. (July 26 at 8.) ♦ Rimsky-Korsakov's **"The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh,"** with Sergeeva, Victor Lutsiuk, and Serge Alexashkin; Mikhail Agrest. (July 25 at 7.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL: "PROKOFIEV MARATHON"

With so much hue and cry about Shostakovich these days, it sometimes seems that the reputation of his old rival Prokofiev has been taken down a notch, with his enormous strengths—a fervent melodic gift, a tart sensibility, orchestration that can set your teeth on edge—seen as the charms of a second-rate artist. But the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center would beg to differ: in the final concerts of a two-day event, they commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death. The pianist Anne-Marie McDermott is the star, not only accompanying such colleagues as the violinist Ida Kavafian and the flutist Ransom Wilson in a selection of the composer's major chamber works but going solo in his towering piano sonatas. July 26 at 3: A concert featuring such works as the Sonata for Two Violins and the Third and Eighth Piano Sonatas. ♦ July 26 at 8: The Flute Sonata in D Major, the Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, and the Fourth and Ninth Piano Sonatas. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.)

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

With its labor problems settled and a new music director—the young French conductor Louis Langrée—at the helm, the festival offers a season mix-

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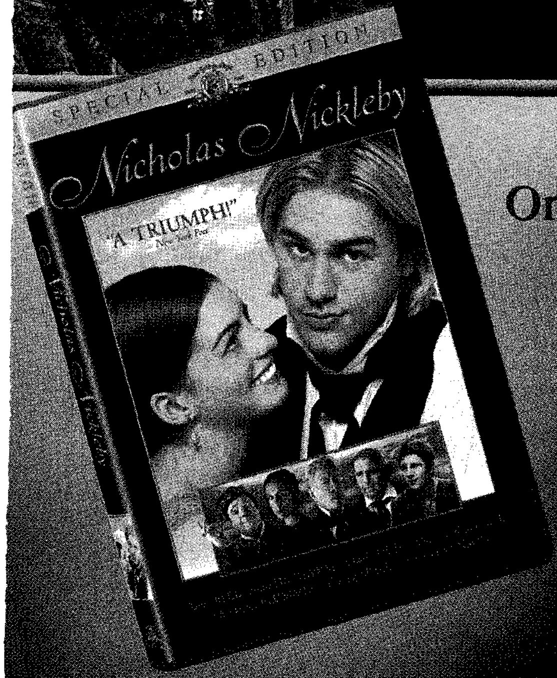
"EXCITING AND BRIMMING WITH LIFE!"

– Chicago Sun-Times



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HOME ENTERTAINMENT

ing chamber music, opera, and dance events along with orchestral performances by the Mostly Mozart Orchestra and visiting ensembles. July 29-30 at 8: Two exceptional young artists make their festival débuts in a pair of opening-night concerts with Langrée and the orchestra. First comes the mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, who sings two arias from "La Clemenza di Tito"; next is the piano phenom Lang Lang, who plays Mendelssohn's Concerto No. 1 in G Minor. Langrée and his orchestra go it alone in Beethoven's Fourth Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ July 29 at 8: The first of three encore performances of "Winterreise," a dance treatment of Schubert's song cycle (conceived by Trisha Brown) that features the musical and dramatic contributions of the baritone Simon Keenlyside. (John Jay College Theatre, 10th Ave. at 58th St.) (For tickets to both concerts, call 212-721-6500.) ♦ Note: In a special free preview concert, Richard Stoltzman celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of his festival début in an all-Mozart concert with Langrée and the festival orchestra, including the Clarinet Concerto and the "Haffner" Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. July 24 at 7:30. Tickets, which are required, will be available at the box office starting July 23.)

OUT OF TOWN

BARD SUMMERSCAPE

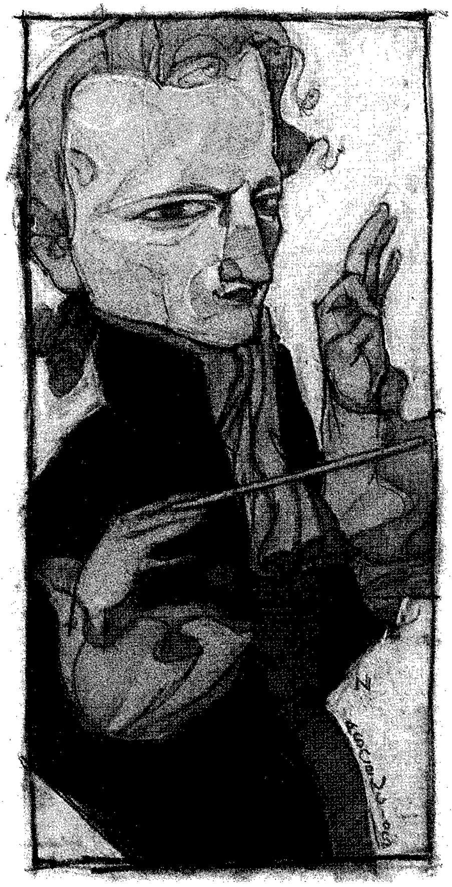
The new summer arts festival at Bard College could hardly have a better home: Frank Gehry's new Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed with the assistance of the gifted acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota, which may just be the most distinctive small concert hall in the United States. This season's festival, which focusses on Janáček, opens with five performances of his semi-autobiographical opera "Osud" ("Fate"), about a composer who becomes infatuated with a former mistress and writes an opera about his life in order to trick destiny. Never performed during Janáček's lifetime, it receives its American stage première here. Gehry himself designed the sets, joining a creative team that includes the director JoAnne Akalaitis and, of course, Bard's president, Leon Botstein (conducting the American Symphony Orchestra); Christine Abraham, Linda Roark-Strummer, and Michael Hendrick lead the cast. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7412. July 23 and July 25 at 8 and July 27 at 4.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL

July 23-24 at 8:30: "Something Wonderful," a cabaret evening featuring music by Richard Rodgers, with the vocalists Heather MacRae, KT Sullivan, Mark Nadler, and Craig Rubano. A dinner precedes each concert at 6:30. ♦ July 25 at 8: Ballet returns to Caramoor's Venetian Theatre with "Dance in the Garden," a program featuring the Stravinsky-Balanchine "Apollo," performed by a quintet that includes the New York City Ballet principals Darci Kistler and Damian Woetzel. ♦ July 26 at 1: Joe Lovano is the artistic director for this season's Caramoor Jazz Festival, which begins with an all-day concert featuring Lovano's nonet, the Cyrus Chestnut Trio, and others. ♦ July 27 at 4:30: Peter Oundjian conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's in music by Beethoven (the Fifth Symphony and the "Emperor" Concerto, with the pianist Leon Fleisher) and Chen Yi (a première). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

NEWPORT MUSIC FESTIVAL

The heart and soul of this busiest of Northeastern festivals is Mark Malkovich III, whose entrée into the yachting town's social scene and taste for exhaustively inclusive programming combine to foster a series that puts the listener's comfort and curiosity first. The never-ending whirl of concerts (up to four a day), taking place in such posh "cottage" settings as the Breakers and the Elms, are dominated this year by the complete chamber-music and song catalogues of Poulenc and Prokofiev, performed by a "family" of mostly young artists that includes the mezzo-soprano Gigi Mitchell-Velasco and the violinist Geoff Nuttall; the week's highlights include an evening of mostly Chopin with that distinguished elder statesman of the keyboard, Earl Wild, on July 23, and the closing concert, an all-Mendelssohn event featuring the pianist Hamish Milne, on July 27. (Newport, R.I. 401-849-0700. For a complete listing of concerts, see www.newportmusic.org.)



Louis Langrée begins his first season as music director of the Mostly Mozart Festival on July 24.

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

July 24 at 8: Handel's **"Orlando,"** featuring Bejun Mehta, Joyce Guyer, and Christine Brandes; Bernard Labadie. ♦ July 25 at 8 and July 29 at 2: **"Don Giovanni,"** with Palle Knudsen, Maria Kanyova, Amy Burton, Kyle Ketelsen, and John McVeigh; Stewart Robertson conducts. ♦ July 26 at 8 and July 28 at 2: The Chicagoland composer Robert Kurka (1921-57) owes his posthumous renown entirely to **"The Good Soldier Schweik,"** a snazzy two-acter that's based on the classic comic novel of the First World War by Jaroslav Hašek. These are the first performances of Rhoda Levine's new production, which features a cast led by Anthony Dean Griffey; Robertson. ♦ July 27 at 2: Offenbach's **"Bluebeard,"** with Tracey Welborn, Phyllis Pancella, and Anthony Laciura; Gerald Steichen. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

TANGLEWOOD

July 24 at 8:30: The Borodin String Quartet, which throughout its many years and personnel changes has remained Russia's most elegant ambassador to the chamber-music world, performs works by Beethoven and Shostakovich (the Quartets Nos. 11-12). ♦ July 25 at 8:30: Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, combining elements of his German and Spanish backgrounds, conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in music by Schubert (the "Unfinished" Symphony) and Falla (a concert performance of "La Vida Breve," featuring the baritone Gino Quilico and the flamenco dancer Nuria Pomares Rojas). ♦ July 26 at 8:30: The soprano Jane Eaglen and the violinist Gil Shaham are the guest artists for a program of Mozart (the Violin Concerto No. 5) and Wagner (excerpts from "Götterdämmerung"), conducted by Jeffrey Tate. ♦ July 27 at 2:30: Miguel Harth-Bedoya, making his B.S.O. début, leads the orchestra in music by Rossini, Mozart (the Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-Flat Major, with Garrick Ohlsson), Kodály, and Osvaldo Golijov (a selection of orchestral songs, with Dawn Upshaw). (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

MOHAWK TRAIL CONCERTS

The little festival closes its season with an evening of arias and scenes by such composers as Verdi, Bizet, and Puccini, accompanied at the piano by Kevin Rhodes (the music director of the Springfield Symphony); the singers include Maria Ferrante and James Kleyla. (Federated Church, Route 2, Charlemont, Mass. 413-625-9511. July 25-26 at 8.)

MARLBORO FESTIVAL

The festival, chamber music's holiest shrine, continues with five weekends of performances by some of the world's leading artists and their very talented students. Programs are available one week before each concert on www.marlboromusic.org. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. July 25-26 at 8:30 and July 27 at 2:30.)

BANG ON A CAN SUMMER INSTITUTE

These playful New York rebels return in their second summer pilgrimage to the Berkshire hills. This week they'll be featuring work by their composer-in-residence (and one of their spiritual fathers), the Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, in what is for them a short affair—a six-hour marathon of new music with a populist-rock tilt. (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, 87 Marshall St., North Adams, Mass. 413-662-2111. July 26 at 4. This is the final performance.)

MUSIC FESTIVAL OF THE HAMPTONS

The young Israeli pianist Daniel Gortler is the special guest for a grand program of orchestral and operatic works by Beethoven (the "Choral Fantasy" and the finale from "Fidelio") and Verdi (excerpts from "Nabucco"), in a concert that wraps up the festival's final week. Robert Bass conducts the Collegiate Chorale; the vocalists include Elizabeth Perryman and Mark Rucker. (Snake Hollow Rd., Bridgehampton, N.Y. 800-644-4418. July 26 at 8.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

July 26 at 8: The mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley and the pianist Daniel Beckwith (who moonlights as a conductor at City Opera) launch Maverick's new "Duets" series with a mostly mid-century program of songs by Berg and Britten and cabaret numbers by Eisler, Weill, and Ricky Ian Gordon. ♦ July 27 at 3: The Miami String Quartet plays music by Mozart, Barber, and Grieg. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

The St. Petersburg String Quartet performs an all-Brahms concert featuring the Piano Quintet in F Minor (with Maxim Mogilevsky). (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 27 at 3.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

July 22 at 7: Aaron Naparstek, the author of "Honku: The Zen Antidote to Road Rage," offers selections from his work ("Need a few days off / after Sunday night drive from / the vacation house.") and discusses the egg-throwing incident with a New York City motorist that inspired it. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ July 24 at 7:30: The novelists Zadie Smith and Louis Edwards give an alfresco reading of their work. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. For more information, call 212-360-2777.) ♦ July 26 at 7: Dave Eggers reads from his novel, "You Shall Know Our Velocity," and his fellow *McSweeney's*-ites Sarah Vowell and Sean Wilsey read work of their own. (Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. 212-358-7503.) ♦ July 27 at 7: The Chinese poet Zheng Danyi reads from his new collection, "Wings of Summer." Madeleine Marie Slavick, a poet and photographer from Hong Kong, will also present a multimedia performance. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery. 212-614-0505.)

TALK

July 24 at 5:30: Edward T. O'Donnell, the author of "Ship Ablaze: The Tragedy of the Steamboat General Slocum," talks about the day in June of 1904 when more than a thousand New Yorkers died in the East River. (The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 122 E. 58th St. For information about reservations, call 212-755-8532, ext. 36.)

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MOVIES OPENING

BALSEROS (CUBAN RAFTERS)
Carles Bosch and Josep M. Domènech's documentary follows the lives of seven Cubans, beginning with their construction of makeshift rafts for the journey to Florida. In English and Spanish. Opening July 23. (Film Forum.)

BUFFALO SOLDIERS
A U.S. Army clerk (Joaquin Phoenix) runs a black-market operation in West Germany, in a dark comedy set around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. With Anna Paquin, Scott Glenn, and Ed Harris. Directed by Gregor Jordan. Opening July 25.

CAMP
Todd Graff wrote and directed this drama about a group of teen-age outcasts who attend a summer program for aspiring actors. Opening July 25. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE CRADLE OF LIFE
In a sequel to the 2001 action movie, Angelina Jolie returns as the intrepid archeologist and adventurer Lara Croft. Opening July 25.

LUCÍA, LUCÍA
A Mexican woman (Cecilia Roth) searches for her husband, who has disappeared without explanation. Antonio Serrano wrote and directed. In Spanish. Opening July 25.

MASKED AND ANONYMOUS
Bob Dylan plays a legendary musician who is sprung from a Latin American jail to play a televised benefit concert, in a drama he co-wrote with Larry Charles, who directed. The ensemble cast includes Penélope Cruz, Jessica Lange, and John Goodman. Opening July 24.

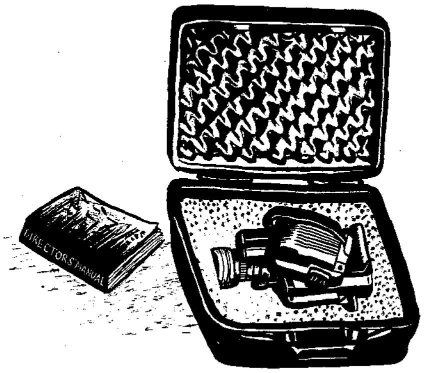
MONDAYS IN THE SUN
The story of six dockworkers coping with the closure of the shipyard where they worked. Written and directed by Fernando León de Aranoa. With Javier Bardem. In Spanish. Opening July 25.

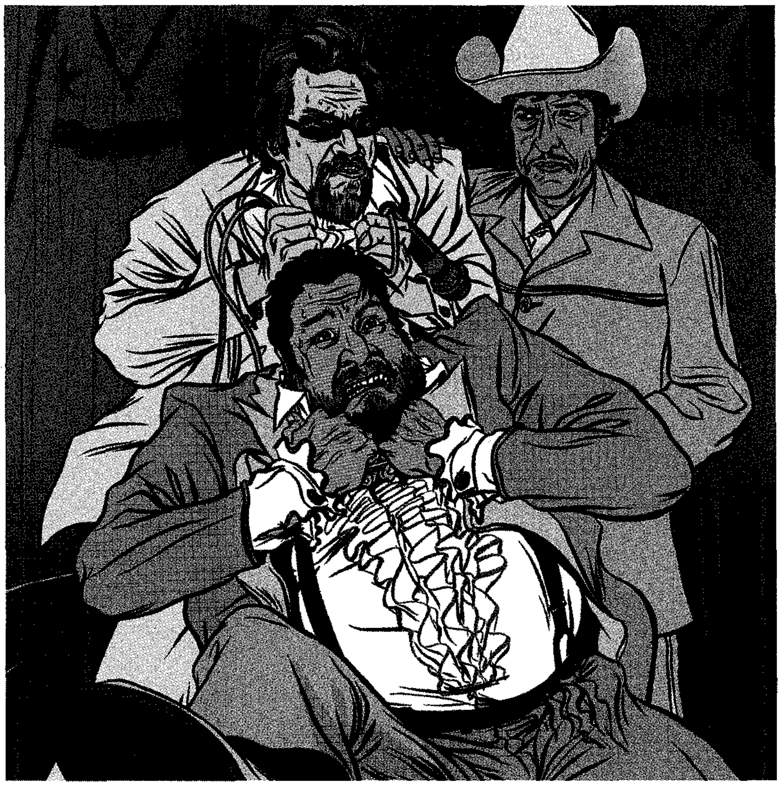
SEABISCUIT
A drama set in the nineteen-thirties and based on the true story of a neglected horse that became a racetrack champion. With Tobey Maguire, Jeff Bridges, Elizabeth Banks, and Chris Cooper. Directed by Gary Ross. Opening July 25.

SPY KIDS 3-D: GAME OVER
The writer-director Robert Rodriguez uses stereoscopic technology in the third installment of his action series, in which the kids (Alexa Vega and Daryl Sabara) match wits with a villain called the Toymaker (Sylvester Stallone). The cast also includes Carla Gugino, Antonio Banderas, Steve Buscemi, and Cheech Marin. Opening July 25.

FILM NOTES

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM
A crowd-pleasing British movie devoted to the radical idea that girls can play soccer and sprain their ankles. Jess (Parminder Nagra) is a Sikh who hides her love of the game from her conservative parents, while Jules (Keira Knightley) is a tomboy who defies her English mother. Both have a thing for their Irish coach, Joe (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers)—he of the wounded knee and the watery eyes. The movie is a hodgepodge: nicely barbed scenes with Jess's family bump against weird practice montages that play like sports-bra ads. What it all adds up to is multicultural empowerment for the pre-teen shin-guard crowd.—*Michael Agger* (Cinema Village, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)




John Goodman, Jeff Bridges, and Bob Dylan in "Masked and Anonymous."

NATHAN FOX

CAPTURING THE FRIEDMANS
Andrew Jarecki's startling documentary offers an approach to truth as richly nuanced but ultimately as futile as Kurosawa's great "Rashomon." In 1987, in Great Neck, Long Island, the police arrested a beloved retired schoolteacher, Arnold Friedman, and his son Jesse on the charge of sexually abusing the young boys who regularly gathered at the Friedman home for computer lessons. Jarecki interviews the police, the attorneys, the judge, and the alleged victims in the case, but the heart of the movie is the family's own footage: the layers of Friedman home movies and stills and the voluminous videos shot by David Friedman, the oldest Friedman boy, throughout the crisis. The two accused men were part of a loving family of five, although Mrs. Friedman, emotionally stranded by her husband, was not part of the jokes and the camaraderie. Before our astounded eyes the entire fantastic mess unfolds like a bloody Greek legend—the House of Atreus reincarnated in a middle-class Jewish family. Edited by Richard Hankin.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/2/03.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas.)

CHARLIE'S ANGELS: FULL THROTTLE
The sensationally long-waisted Cameron Diaz, a goofy beauty with a foot-wide smile, takes the pratfalls; Drew Barrymore, defiantly clinging to baby fat, is moody and unfulfilled, with hidden areas of melancholy; Lucy Liu, flinging her black hair around like a weapon, is the most imperious and beautiful of the three. They spend most of their time flipping over backward in the air in gorgeous slow-mo and then falling down in a heap and having laughing fits. The second installment of the "Charlie's Angels" franchise is immensely pleased with itself in the manner of adorable kids who know they can get away with anything—the movie's commercial opportunism is so self-confident in its silliness that you can't really fight it. Everything goes down easy except the strained presence of Demi Moore as an ex-Angel who has gone over to the dark side. The super-tight closeups reveal her usual lack of humor and what is normally called talent and also her utter determination to prevail—an unwitting reminder of how much work, in a picture like this, must go into the illusion of frivolous inconsequence. Directed by the former music-video ace McG.—*D.D.* (7/7/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

FINDING NEMO
The latest flood of wizardry from Pixar, whose productions, from "Toy Story" onward, have lent an indispensable vigor and wit to the sagging art of mainstream animation. Whether the new movie, directed by Andrew Stanton, will add much to that resuscitation is another matter. Albert Brooks provides the voice of Marlin, a non-amusing clown fish who sees his young son, Nemo, borne off in a diver's net. Not to be daunted, and plainly unfazed by the threat of both sharks and sentimentality, Marlin sets off to rescue his only child. You'll never guess how it ends. The technical skill on show is beyond question, but, as yet another computer-generated seascape ripples past, you may be tempted to ask whether that skill is driving the story; Marlin just drifts from one semi-heroic feat to the next, and the characters seldom get their hooks, or their jaws, into you with the pointed, snippy comedy that we have come to associate with Woody and Buzz Lightyear. Also, not to be impolite or anything, but how expressive is a fish, until it hits a grill? With the voices of Geoffrey Rush, Barry Humphries, Willem Dafoe, Allison Janney, and—the funniest of the shoal—Ellen DeGeneres.—*Anthony Lane* (6/9/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

FRIDAY NIGHT
A woman (Valérie Lemercier) in Paris preparing to move in with her boyfriend the next morning gets stuck in a traffic jam, allows a strange man (Vincent Lindon) into her car, and goes to bed with him in a hotel without exchanging more than a few words. The movie is about a momentary connection made in the night, but the director Claire Denis's technique, which depends on non-continuous cutting, produces disconnection. In the end, not much happens between these two. The movie is dark-toned and rather furtive, its emotional transactions attenuated to the point of nullity. A perfect one-night stand is no doubt a familiar fantasy, but this movie has been made without fantasy. In French.—*D.D.* (6/16 & 23/03) (Kew Gardens, New York Twin, and Quad Cinema.)

THE HARVEY GIRLS
In this lavish, high-spirited M-G-M period musical, Judy Garland leads the forces of respectability (the clean, starched waitresses who serve travellers food only) and Angela Lansbury is the wicked, glittering dance-hall queen whose girls provide God-knows-what illicit pleasures. The central conceit

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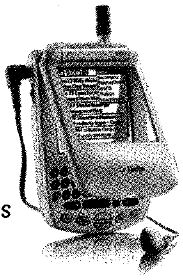

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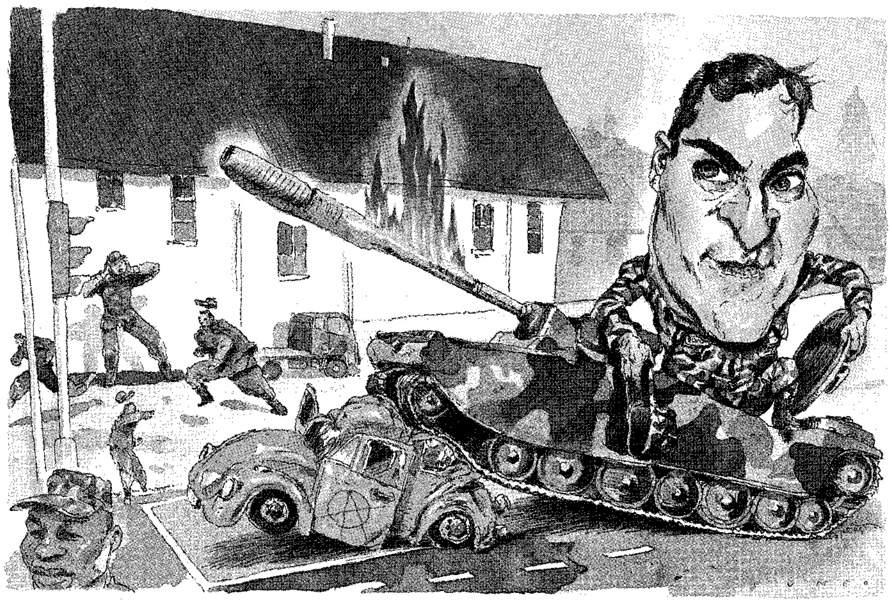
of glorifying progress and moral uplift in a musical comedy set in New Mexico in the eighteen-eighties is certainly a strange one, but it worked out surprisingly well—though the charm is mostly heavy. There is, of course, the deservedly famous classic number "On the Atchison, Topeka, and the Santa Fe"—it's one of the triumphant sequences in screen-musical history. George Sidney directed. Originally released in 1946.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; July 24.)

THE HOUSEKEEPER

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE HULK

When angry, the scientist Bruce Banner (Eric Bana) turns into a huge, rampaging monster. But then Bruce—all fifteen feet of him, green, grotesquely muscled, and mostly naked—approaches his lab colleague Betty, played by Jennifer Connelly, the mater dolorosa of the American cinema, and shrinks to his normal self. In brief, this beauty-and-the-beast movie is not a fable of mad passion, it's a fable of detumescence. The director Ang Lee and the writers James Schamus, John Turman, and Michael France can't seem to find the dramatic center of the material. They've made, of all things, a rather earnest and laborious picture about parent-child relationships: both Bruce and Betty struggle against their fathers. But without some sort of pop madness roiling around in the basement, a monster movie has very little reason to exist. Frederick Elmes's cinematography is entrancingly beautiful, but the computer-generated green giant is a dull, soulless beast, in comparison to whom King Kong is a veritable John Keats. Nick Nolte, as Bruce's mad-scientist father, has a couple of baffling rants about going beyond God and taking over the world—or something like that. With Sam Elliott as Jennifer Connelly's tough-as-nails military dad.—*D.D.* (7/7/03) (Empire 25 and Union Square.)



Joaquin Phoenix as a corrupt Army clerk in "Buffalo Soldiers," opening July 25.

JOHN CUNEO

THE ITALIAN JOB

Edward Norton, pulling his chin down and showing off a mean spot of beard, acts the mild and recessive Mark Wahlberg off the screen in this elaborate international heist movie about bad and good gold thieves. As a piece of summer-season craftsmanship the movie is fine: the camera rises majestically over the Dolomites, and in Venice, speedboats churn up the canals and head into blind turns. There's a dangerous-looking chase in which a small black helicopter hovers right over a car in the streets of Los Angeles, and the director F. Gary Gray uses a fleet of buzzing, squared-off Minis extremely well, shooting the tiny cars into a subway tunnel just ahead of a train, making them jump and spin and flip like toys. Don't expect much more, however, than a pleasant workout. Seth Green and Mos Def are very funny in minor roles. With the creamy Charlize Theron as the daughter of master criminal Donald Sutherland.—*D.D.* (6/16/03) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SPELLBOUND

Jeffrey Blitz's charming documentary follows eight elementary students competing in the 1999 National Spelling Bee; he rode the bus to school with them, interviewed their teachers, checked out their rooms, and, in one case, listened while a kid talked like a robot. The sample of children is appropriately diverse—in region, in race, in the thoroughness of their preparations. Some of their parents see the spelling bee as representing the immigrant dream of America in miniature, while others seem amazed at the intensity of their nerdy offspring. The competitions are tense, and Blitz cobbles together a series of heartbreaking reaction shots of errant spellers. His direction shows a clever, occasionally flippant selection of detail—the dog-eared unabridged dictionaries, the congratulatory sign posted outside Hooters, the prodigy who signs his autographs "Trust in Jesus."—*M.A.* (Empire 25 and Quad Cinema.)

THE TARNISHED ANGELS

Rock Hudson said that this 1958 movie was not like his others—that he disapproved of it, and that such nasty stories shouldn't be presented to the American public. The nasty material is William Faulkner's "Pylon," adapted by George Zuckerman. Set in New Orleans in 1931, the movie attempts to re-create Faulkner's hectic, feverish atmosphere and heroes—the ex-war pilots who will do anything to sustain the thrill of flying. The daredevils are played by Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone as his promiscuous parachutist wife, and Jack Carson as a mechanic; Hudson, pooped as ever, is the heavy-drinking reporter who wants to do a story on the trio. This movie would have been better—in its odd, neo-thirties sort of way—if the last quarter hour had been left out. It's the kind of bad movie that you know is bad—and yet you're held by the mixture of polished style and quasi-melodramatics achieved by the director, Douglas Sirk.—*P.K.* (Moving Image; July 27.)

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES

"Ah'll be beck," Arnold Schwarzenegger said in the first "Terminator" picture, in 1984, and Schwarzenegger is not a man to renege on his promises. In fact, as you watch him clamber into the old black leathers for the third time and cock his weapon of choice, you could be excused for feeling that he's never been away. This latest and stalest installment of the "Terminator" saga is directed not by James Cameron, the father of the franchise, but by Jonathan Mostow; he does a dogged job, and you can see where the money went (a hundred and seventy million dollars, apparently), but in the process, the lurking threat of the earlier movies has been squeezed out. One mystery remains: was it commercial good sense, or mere cynicism, to have the plot of Mostow's film so gleefully replicate that of "Terminator 2: Judgement Day"? The new nemesis is a gleaming female cyborg named T-X (Kristanna Loken), who spurns all emotion save for a sudden, violent attraction to a giant magnet. Meanwhile, the fate of the world rests in the hands of a young couple (Claire Danes and Nick Stahl), who seem understandably peeved at the responsibility. As for the machines of the subtitle, to what position, exactly, have they risen? Are they running the studio?—*A.L.* (7/14 & 21/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

28 DAYS LATER

Another helpful development for the British Tourist Board. Danny Boyle's horror film, alternately savage and glum, shows London—and, by implication, most of England—destroyed by a fast-acting plague. Borne in the blood, it passes from one Brit to another with a single bite; soon, the capital is empty save for marauding zombies, leaving the unchewed—such as Jim (Cillian Murphy) and Selena (Naomie Harris)—to drift around, shop without paying, and never quite have sex. Any resemblance to normal teen-age behavior is entirely coincidental. Brendan Gleeson, much the best and cheeriest thing in the movie, plays a taxi-driver who helps them to leave town; from here on, Boyle and his screenwriter, Alex Garland, run out of gas. The picture is twitchy and annoying, flecked with blood and half-digested ideas, and too much is left unexplained. As a scheme for solving central London's traffic problem, though, it is unlikely to be surpassed.—*A.L.* (6/30/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

WINGED MIGRATION

The French filmmaker Jacques Perrin shows us things we have never seen before: the alien world of insects in "Microcosmos" and, now, migrating birds in all their airborne glory. Perrin and his team of camera operators employ remote-control gliders and balloons to astonishing effect—the camera literally flies alongside the birds as they wing their way north and south in their search for food. They capture some amazing solo efforts, like the common murre who plunges off a ten-story seaside cliff, as well as the beauty of numbers, as in the scene of an entire flock of white-faced whistling ducks, all turning their heads at once. The images are mostly left alone, with minimal dialogue and endurable New Age music. Bird-lovers will be in heaven, and the less ornithologically inclined will be surprised to learn that some Canada geese don't hang around golf courses all winter. Among the more unforgettable birds on display is the Clark's grebe, which can pull off the cool trick of walking on water.—*M.A.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Paris, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BAD BOYS II

Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Theatre.

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS

Cinema 1, Lincoln Square, and Sunshine Cinema.

SWIMMING POOL

BAM Rose Cinemas, Beekman, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.

WHALE RIDER

BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, 59th Street East Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 7: "Eyes Wide Shut: The Evolution of Widescreen Cinema." July 26 at 2: "Forbidden Planet" (1956, Fred M. Wilcox). ♦ July 26 at 4: "Forty Guns" (1957, Samuel Fuller). ♦ July 27 at 2: "The Tarnished Angels" (†). ♦ July 27 at 4: "The Sun's Burial" (1960, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese). ♦ Repertory nights. July 26-27 at 6:30: "High and Low" (1963, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Through July 27: An Aki Kaurismäki retrospective. All films are in Finnish. July 24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10; "La Vie de Bohème" (1991). ♦ July 25 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Match Factory Girl" (1990). ♦ July 26 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Drifting Clouds" (1996). ♦ July 27 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Juha" (1999). ♦ Billy Wilder films. July 28 at 5 and 8: "Avanti!" (1972). ♦ Repertory favorites. July 29 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Flash Gordon" (1980, Mike Hodges).

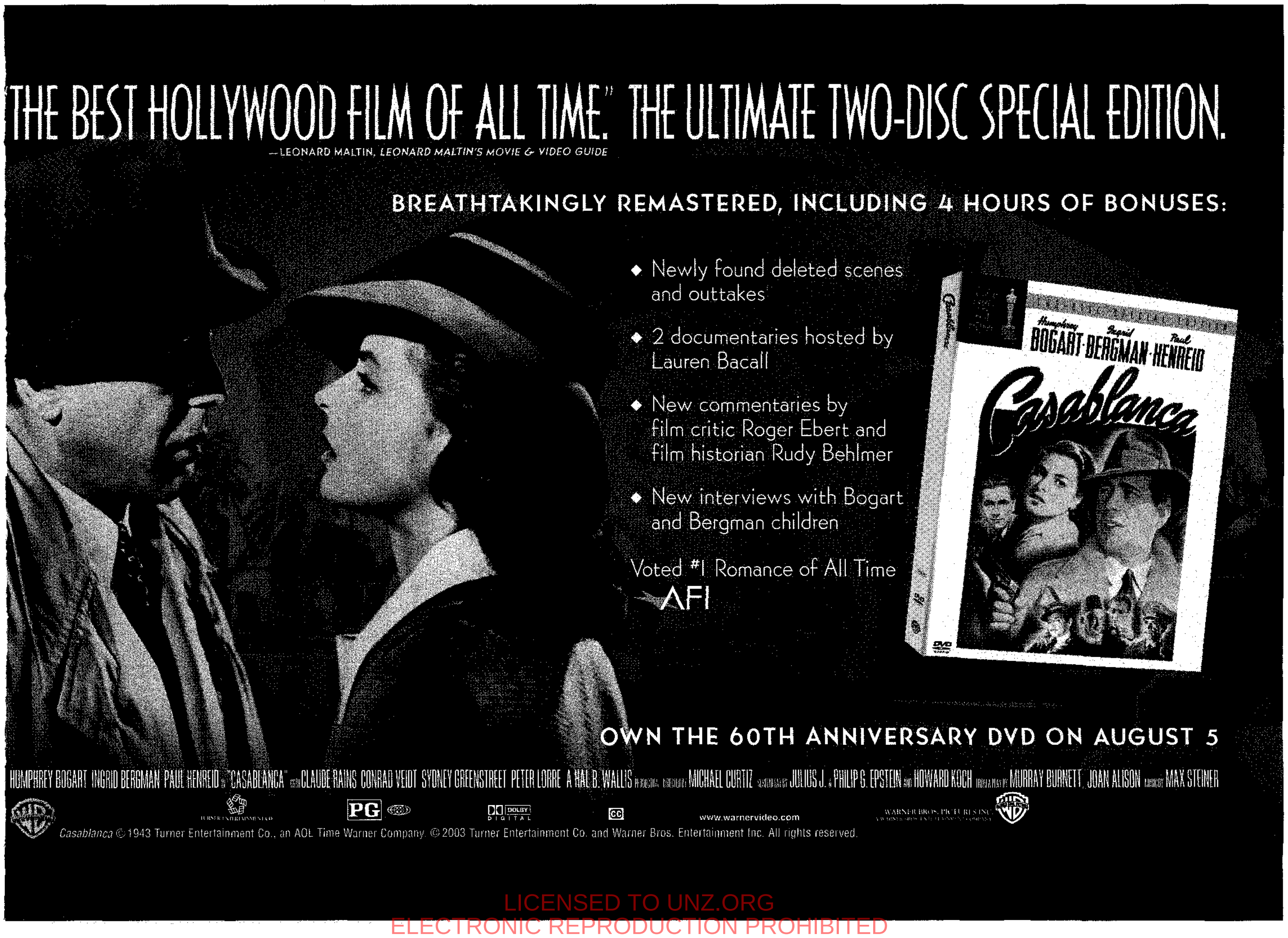
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through July 24: "The Freed Unit and the Golden Age of the M-G-M Musical," a tribute to Arthur Freed's classic productions. July 23 at 1:30, 5:25, and 9:20: "On the Town" (1949, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen). ♦ July 23 at 3:30 and 7:25: "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" (1949, Busby Berkeley). ♦ July 24 at 1:20, 5:30, and 9:40: "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1944, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ July 24 at 3:30 and 7:40: "The Harvey Girls" (†). ♦ Starting July 25: "Pier Paolo Pasolini's Three Medieval Tales." All films are in Italian. July 25-27 at 1:15, 3:25, 5:35, 7:45, and 9:55: "The Decameron" (1970). ♦ July 28 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "The Canterbury Tales" (1971). ♦ July 29 at 1:30, 4, 6:30, and 9: "Arabian Nights" (1974).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through July 28: "Première Brazil!" All films are in Portuguese. July 24 at 2 and July 26 at 1: "Two Lost in a Dirty Night" (2002, José Joffily). ♦ July 24 at 4:30 and July 25 at 6:45: "Durval Records" (2002, Anna Muylaert). ♦ July 24 at 7 and July 26 at 6: "Window of the Soul" (2001, João Jardim and Walter Carvalho). ♦ July 25 at 2 and July 27 at 6: "Two Summers" (2002, Jorge Furtado). ♦ July 25 at 4:30 and July 26 at 8:30: "Master: A Building in Copacabana" (2002, Eduardo Coutinho). ♦ July 25 at 9 and July 27 at 2: "Breaking Up" (2002, Domingos Oliveira). ♦ July 26 at 3:30 and July 27 at 4:30: "Desmundo" (2002, Alain Fresnot).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. July 25-26: "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" (1998, Terry Gilliam).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Aug. 31: "Classic Thalia from the Kino International Collection." July 25 at 7 and July 26 at 1: "The Blue Angel" (1930, Josef von Sternberg; in German). ♦ July 25 at 9 and July 26 at 3: "M" (1931, Fritz Lang; in German). ♦ July 26 at 6 and July 27 at 1: "Simone de Beauvoir" (1982, Malka Robowska and Josée Dayan; in French). ♦ July 26 at 8 and July 27 at 3: "Sartre by Himself" (1979, Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat; in French). ♦ July 27 at 7: "Ivan the Terrible, Parts I and II" (1945/1958, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—July 23-27: The New York Video Festival, including work by Robert Frank, Alfred Guzzetti, and George Kuchar. See http://www.filmlinc.com for more information.



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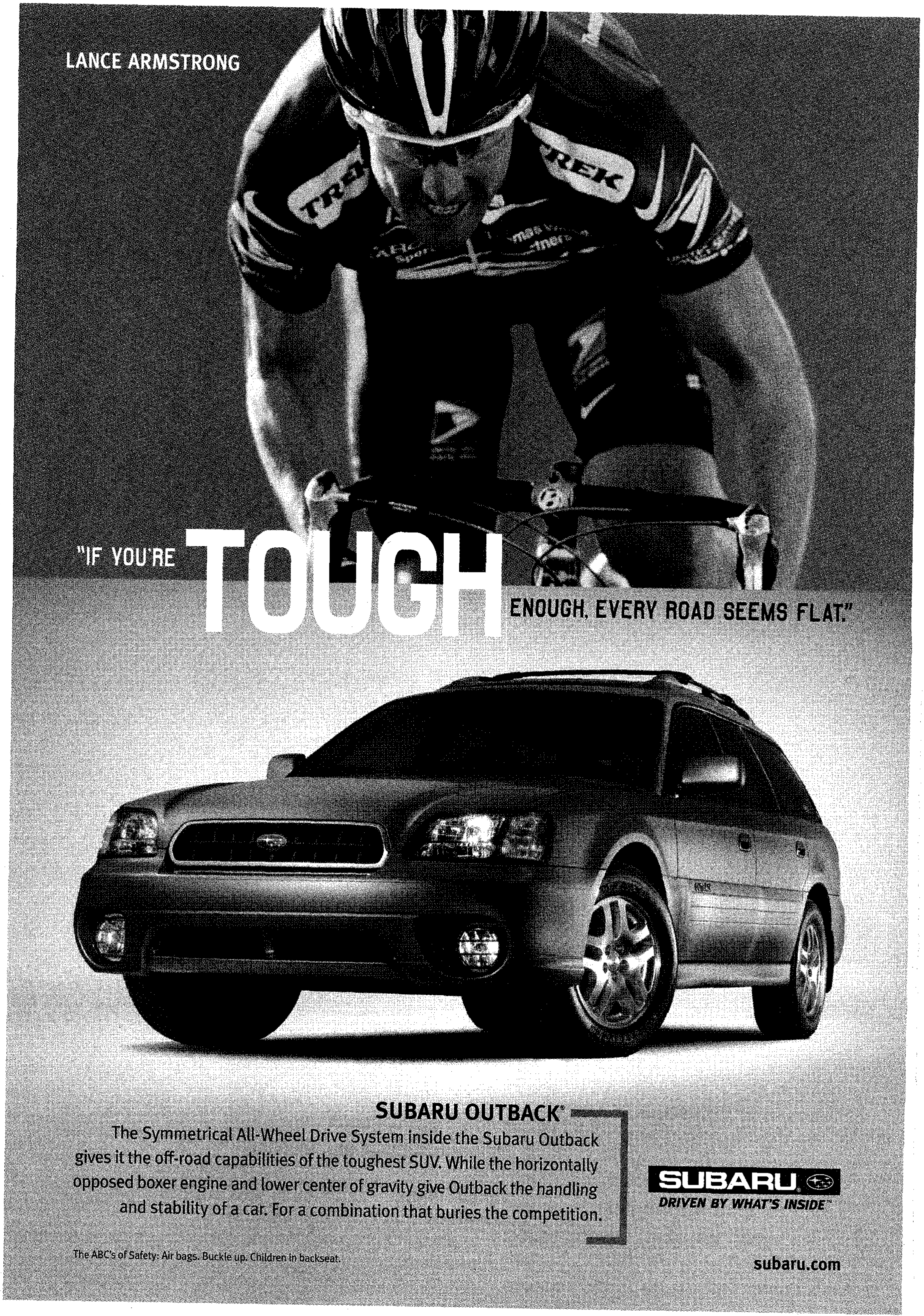

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

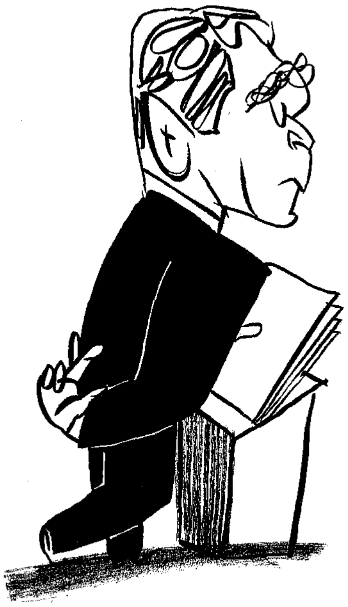
COMMENT
FAITH-BASED INTELLIGENCE

"The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." So said President Bush on January 28th, outlining the case for war with Iraq in his State of the Union address. It was perhaps the most chilling moment of the speech, for it raised the spectre of nuclear weapons in the hands of a dictator who had proved himself capable of terror, invasion, and genocide.

To many listeners, the attribution of this sensational piece of information to the British served only to emphasize its reliability. The President might as well have gone on to say, "And you can take that to the bank, because MI6 doesn't mess around." We now know that if the Administration had been playing it straight there would indeed have been a follow-up line, but it would have been something like this: "The C.I.A., however, believes that this so-called fact is almost certainly untrue."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Indeed, four months earlier, in October, 2002, the Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, had personally intervened to remove from a Presidential speech an assertion that Iraq had tried to buy five hundred tons of uranium oxide from the African country of Niger. That "information" was a fantasy backed by a set of forged documents. The C.I.A. knew it; others in the government knew it; the President had no reason *not* to know it. What's more, by March, a number of reporters—including Seymour M. Hersh, in these pages—had published stories about this dubious intelligence and the pressure that the Pentagon and the Vice-President's office had been exerting on the C.I.A. to square the evidentiary circle. One war later, the President and his team have variously (1) denied that they knew the facts, (2) dissembled over who knew what when, (3) sort-of-but-not-really apologized, (4) said it's only "sixteen words" and "enormously overblown," and (5) ladled blame alternately upon the C.I.A., which had tried, however feebly, to prevent the damage, and the United Kingdom, America's only full-sized partner in the warmaking coalition.



Last week, Ari Fleischer conveyed the Bush team's general contempt for the media's interest in the Niger "documents" and, more generally, for the fact that, three months after the fall of Baghdad, Saddam Hussein's arsenal so far appears more chimerical than chemical. "The President has moved on," Fleischer said in the days before he stepped down as press secretary. "And, I think, frankly, much of the country has moved on as well." The very idea that the Administration had put Iraq's nuclear ambitions at the center of its case for war, Fleischer said, was "a bunch of bull."

The President, for his part, told reporters that the intelligence behind his speech had been "darn good." Never mind that a flood of apoplectic C.I.A. analysts and ex-analysts have been telling reporters for months that the Administration was interested less in the ambiguities of reality than in arming itself with facts, half-facts, and suppositions sufficient to "prove" that Saddam was linked to Al Qaeda and well stocked with weapons of mass destruction. It seems the President shares Ronald Reagan's notion that "facts are stupid things."

In reality, the arguments about Iraq were so complex, and so filled with competing and legitimate claims, that some of us, no matter where we came out, were divided within ourselves. Even the Administration betrayed signs of division: the axis made up of the Pentagon and the Vice-President's office was far more aggressive and unilateralist in the push for war than the State Department and much of the Central Intelligence Agency. In the end, the President made a case for war based broadly on three components: the nature and history of the Iraqi regime; the security of the United States; and the idea that a liberated Iraq would have a transformative effect on the region.

These propositions have fared variously since the fall of the regime. Of the three, the first seems, if anything, even firmer than it did before the war. The Baath regime had sustained itself from the start through the systemic use of torture, assassination, mass murder, and political suppression. Human Rights Watch reports that three hundred thousand people went "missing" under Saddam, and since his fall, twenty mass graves have been discovered. There are likely many more to find. Political prisoners have been freed; torture chambers have been emptied. The Shiites and Kurds, once the focus of Saddam's oppression and slaughter, are no longer under the thumb of the minority Sunnis.

The third proposition, of regional transformation, was highly speculative before, and remains so. Iraq's former enemy Iran is witnessing increasing political ferment among the younger generations, but it is not yet clear whether the American occupation will strengthen or weaken the grip of the theocratic regime in Tehran. Israelis and Palestinians are moving fitfully toward negotiation after two and a half years of sustained suicide bombings, army incursions, and despair; as Seymour Hersh reports elsewhere in this issue, Hezbollah is relatively quiet, having been given pause, perhaps, by the presence nearby of a hundred and fifty thousand American troops. Vice-President Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and others in the Administration are convinced—almost evangelically so—that Saddam's fall will precipitate all manner of positive developments. In the region, as in Iraq itself, much will depend on the constancy of the United States in this ill-prepared, increasingly expensive, and mortally dangerous task of underwriting the rise of a stable, independent, and peaceful successor regime. The early signs are ominous. The continuing attacks on American troops, especially in the Baath strongholds north and west of Baghdad, a development that the new commander of American forces has likened to guerrilla war, does not bode well. Neither does the Administration's reluctance to internationalize the effort to rebuild.

It is the second proposition—that Iraq's chemical, biological, and nuclear arsenals, or programs, constituted an intolerable threat—that at this point seems near collapse. From Blix to Bush, no one disputes the history: over the years, Saddam compiled a documented record of pursuing all three types of weapons and tried to conceal it; Iraq sacked Kuwait, attacked Iran and the Kurds with poison gas, and fired ballistic missiles at four neighboring countries; in 2001, Germany, a country that would be ardently opposed to the war, leaked an intelligence report saying that Saddam could have a nuclear device as soon as 2004; according to Blix and others, Iraq never accounted for hundreds of tons of chemical weapons; and so forth. Yet, since the regime's fall in April, scant evidence has been revealed of a threat so serious as to have justified, in itself, a rush to war. That does not mean that such a threat did not exist. And the Administration did not rest its case on the weapons threat alone. But it was that threat which created the sense of urgency, even emergency.

Since the fall of Communism, the United States has had to shoulder the burdens and responsibilities of the world's sole remaining superpower. For those who had little affection for the Bush Administration but still took up the argument for confronting Saddam, that argument was based on a moral, as well as political, consideration of American power. And it was informed by the fresh memory that when intervention was justified and swift, as it was in Kosovo, the result was, over all, a political, even moral, success; and when it was grievously delayed, as it was in Bosnia, or utterly absent, as it was in Rwanda, the result was a source of abiding shame.

But, in the case of Iraq, it's impossible

SENATOR SPRINGER'S FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

Jerry Springer, the talk show host who put wife-swappers, strippers and skinheads on the air and then watched the punches fly, will file papers to run for the U.S. Senate as early as Friday, advisers said.—*The Associated Press.*

The following pieces of legislation were introduced by Senator Jerry Springer (D-OH) during his first hundred days in office:

The Springer Family Slut-Prevention Act of 2005: Bill would provide as much as $500 in tax relief to any family member who can demonstrate that his or her daughter, mother, or grandmother dresses like a slut and/or is out of control, as long as the $500 is used to retain the services of a drill sergeant to berate the slutty family member until she dissolves into a puddle of remorseful tears.

The Springer Spandex Tube-Top Subsidy Act of 2005: Bill would subsidize the manufacture, marketing, and consumption of spandex tube tops, particularly those worn by men who sleep with their wives' brothers because they aren't getting enough of what they need at home.

The Springer Folding-Chair Injury Leave Bill of 2005: Bill would provide medical leave for any employee who finds him or herself bruised, contused, or otherwise injured as a result of being bashed over the head with a folding chair by an irate stripper, skinhead, white supremacist, or out-of-control slutty daughter, mother, or grandmother.

The Springer Sweeps-Week Benediction Elimination Act of 2005: Bill would eliminate the traditional benediction by the Senate chaplain during the periods designated by the television industry as "sweeps weeks"; bill calls for the chaplain to lead the Senate, during those weeks, in a robust chant of "Jer-ry! Jer-ry! Jer-ry!" and provides funds for the installation of hidden cameras in the Senate cloakroom.

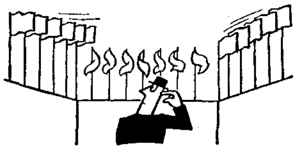
The Springer Equine Matrimonial Equality Act of 2005: Bill would provide full health coverage and pension benefits, as well as reduce the so-called "marriage penalty" in the federal tax code, for any American citizen who can prove that he or she is married to a horse.

—*Andy Borowitz*

to be indifferent to the prospect that intelligence has been manipulated, forged, or bullied into shape. Government cynicism—in Vietnam, in the Iran-Contra affair, in the tacit indulgence of Saddam's gassing of the Kurds in 1988 and his slaughter of the Shiites in 1991—inevitably cripples the country's ability to cope with future crises. The United States, and the world, has now to deal with the reconstruction of Iraq, to say nothing of the dangers faced in North Korea, South Asia, and elsewhere. The Administration evidently calculates that its popularity is such that no one much cares about the petty questions of means and ends. The Administration is wrong. A serious investigation is urgently needed. The American people cannot be expected, in Ari Fleischer's blithe formulation, to get with the program and "move on."

—*David Remnick*

DEPT. OF DIPLOMACY
BLACKBALLED BY BUSH



The unlikely shared enemy of the Bush Administration and Robert Mugabe's regime, in Zimbabwe, it turns out, is a soft-spoken sixty-four-year-old Swedish diplomat who rides around Manhattan in a Saab, socializes with George Soros, and holds a black belt in judo. Pierre Schori, Sweden's Ambassador to the United Nations, and a former member of both the European and the Swedish Parliaments, had until recently been planning to move his family from the Upper East Side, where they have lived for the past three years, to Pristina, where he expected to become the new head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. But instead Schori, who was not shy about expressing his distaste for the invasion of Iraq ("My cool compatriot gave no mandate for war; instead of Blitzkrieg, we got Blix inspections," he liked to say, alluding to his countryman Hans Blix), has been blackballed by the United States. Despite receiving a unanimous recommendation for the post from the European Union, in May, as well as the full approval of Russia, Schori learned definitively last month that, thanks to White House intransigence, he will not be moving to Kosovo after all.

"I find it so outrageous," Schori said the other day, in his corner office at the Swedish Mission, on the forty-sixth floor of One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, overlooking the East River. "Only twice have I been stopped in my official duty as a European Union representative on a mission for democracy. Once, when I was kicked out by Mugabe in a very brutal way." Schori headed the E.U. election-observer team that was expelled from Zimbabwe in the weeks preceding last year's contested Presidential election. "And the other is this. Zimbabwe was clear-cut. But Kosovo is something else, something more anonymous."

Ostensibly, the Americans' reasons for opposing Schori are that Sweden is not a member of NATO and that Schori lacks the proper experience. This, at least, is what the Swedish foreign ministry was told by the U.S. Ambassador in Stockholm, and again, later, by Colin Powell. Schori has heard from friends both here and abroad, however, that it is, in fact, his lack of support for the Iraq war—and, long before that, his objections to Vietnam and Latin America policies during the Nixon and Reagan Administrations—that makes him unattractive to the powers in Washington. The European press, including the *Financial Times*, has largely supported this account. Schori, meanwhile, cites personal mementos from Henry Kissinger and John Negroponte as evidence of amiable diplomacy in the face of political differences over the years. (A State Department spokesman last week declined to comment on the reasons for Schori's rejection.)

Schori would not be the first international representative to fall victim to the Bush Administration's seemingly personal agenda. Last April, for instance, José Bustani, the Brazilian director-general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, was removed from power with a vote of no-confidence instigated by the State Department, which had threatened to withhold annual budget payments if Bustani remained for a full term. The U.S. charged Bustani with "financial mismanagement" and "ill-considered initiatives," but was reported to have opposed him principally because he was in favor of sending chemical-weapons inspectors into Iraq.

Meddling in a U.N. appointment that has traditionally been handled by the European Union (which provides more than eighty per cent of project funding), however, marks a new level of petty retribution, and Schori, who is tall, and bald, like Blix, with sharp features and blue eyes, believes he has been maliciously miscast. "I am outraged at the accusation of being anti-American," he said. "It reeks of McCarthyism. Is somebody afraid of independent Swedes?"

Pierre Schori

He looked out the south-facing window. "I watched the towers fall right here," he said. "I could see the fire burning. Everyone came in here and cried." He turned and faced east, gesturing at the Trump World Tower. "Here we have one of the things I admire most about America—the spirit of competitive entrepreneurship," he said. Then he gestured to the comparatively paltry U.N. complex nearby. "And here—international coöperation. But it's more like international squalor. So I wrote Mr. Trump a letter. I asked him for help in repairing the U.N. facility, which will require one billion dollars. He replied that he will do it for one-third the price of the lowest estimate. We will see."

Schori took a seat by a coffee table covered with books: "Iraq: In the Eye of the Storm," "Kennedy's Wars," "Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa." He continued to reminisce. "If anybody is pro-American, it's me. I was here for the first time as a sailor when I was fourteen. My American adventure—it was a Holden Caulfield trip, kind of. I read everything. 'Studs Lonigan' was my favorite." He recalled being awed, as a young boy, by an exhibition about the Marshall Plan that travelled by train through Europe in the nineteen-forties, and he spoke of taking his son to visit the beaches of Normandy years later.

He also described a visit he'd made to Washington, in 1987, the year after Prime Minister Olof Palme had been assassinated. "I remember, at the traditional dinner at the White House, they would have a dance afterward," he said. "On the floor, Papa Bush bumped into me. And he said, 'Pierre, I'm so sad that Olof Palme couldn't be here.' I mean, that's so civilized! They have nothing of this feature here now."

Michael Steiner, the German who has led the Kosovo mission for the past year and a half, vacated his post earlier this month, and Kofi Annan has yet to nominate a successor. Schori, who is still angry, left late last week for what he called a "welfare-state vacation"—six weeks back home in Sweden, with a brief stopover in the Balkans for a women's-rights conference. "Part of my heart is in the Balkans," he said.

"I'm sad, of course, not being able to do my European duty, because Kosovo is a European dilemma. I mean, it's really a challenge for Europe's future," he said. "But at least the theatres here are better than in Pristina."

—*Ben McGrath*

TODAY'S C.I.A. CANTEEN LUNCH MENU

APPETIZERS

Delicious Homemade Bean Soup[1]
Original Chesapeake Clam Chowder[2]
Mixed Greens, Choice of Dressing[3]

ENTRÉES

Fresh Coho Salmon[4]
Roasted Free-Range Chicken[5]
Macaroni and Cheese
Club Sandwich[6]

SIDE DISHES

French Fries[7]
Coleslaw
Onion Rings[8]

DESSERTS

Rice Pudding[9]
Profiteroles[10]

Preliminary findings: 1. Adjectival misdeployment. An internal review has revealed that there is no factual foundation for the statement that the bean soup is either "homemade" or "delicious." Information that it is an off-brand canned variety was suppressed by the sous-chef, in contravention of C.I.A. menu guidelines. 2. Larder pre-inspection shortfall. Chef has reminded kitchen staff that he announced that clam-chowder supplies had been exhausted (0900 hours, 7/19/03), and staff failed to initiate replacement order, damaging chef's credibility. 3. Unverified data forwarded as fact. Only oil and vinegar available. 4. Unsubstantiated allegation. Chef remembers that he was parking his car when salmon shipment was unloaded, and that a kitchen staffer obscured stamped notice on freezer bag, "NOT FRESH COHO SALMON," as he passed by, then failed to correct menu misstatement. 5. Unverified data forwarded as fact. Chef recalls quoting background file to staff on 7/14/03, specifically noting that chickens in question had operated within a strictly limited geographical range, but adds that he was on the phone to the car-repair shop when the unauthenticated claim of "free-range" was added to the menu text. 6. Unmerited quality claim. Chef disputes kitchen staff's contention that he ordered a ham-and-cheese on rye to be cut into triangles and designated "club sandwich" on menu. 7. Vital information withheld. Chef maintains that he was not informed that deep fryer was down for maintenance and that prebagged commercial potato chips would temporarily replace French fries. 8. Potential terrorist sabotage. Chef was in the men's room when this menu section was compiled. Person or persons unknown added nonexistent onion rings to menu. 9. Unauthorized pudding switch. Chef reports that he was conferring with cafeteria patrons and thus unaware when kiwi-lime Jell-O was substituted for rice pudding on the dessert menu. A meat-loaf emergency distracted him from checking the final draft. 10. Profiteroles have not been available in the C.I.A. canteen since the pastry section was closed down, in August, 1987. Chef was briefed accordingly on 4/30/03, but this fact was not recorded in kitchen logbook, leading him to forget this information before signing off on today's menu.

—*Bruce McCall*

THE PICTURES
REUNION

Forty years ago, Steve Satin and Madelyne Klein fell in love on a roller coaster, the Coney Island Cyclone. Before long, they were Steve-and-Maddy, the golden couple of Lincoln High, where she sang in musicals and he was co-captain of the basketball team. Their plan was that she would support him through medical school by teaching and they would have two children and live in the suburbs.

Then the sixties went off like a bomb and blew them out of Brighton Beach forever. For their honeymoon, in 1971, Satin and Klein and four friends meandered across the country in a Volkswagen bus, camping out, listening to the Allman Brothers, letting their hair grow. Everything seemed possible.

Seven months later, their marriage was over, and a communal innocence seemed to die with it. Satin's friend Lee Schleifer, whose fling with Klein contributed to the marriage's dissolution, became a drug dealer and was later shot to death. Satin, the sunny ringleader who had always made sure that everyone had the right mix of pot and Quaaludes, also began dealing to support his habit. In "The Boys of 2nd Street Park," a new documentary about Satin and five of his basketball-playing boyhood friends, Klein says, "The counterculture was very bad for our relationship," adding, "I can't say that it was bad for me, but it was really bad for him." During Satin's long addiction to heroin and cocaine, his life slowly fell apart: his second marriage failed; his five-year-old son from that marriage developed leukemia and later died in his arms; and in 1996 he showed up one day at the Manhattan office of his old friend Dan Klores, homeless, toothless, and in trouble for having kited checks at the Port Authority.

Klores, a prominent public-relations executive, got Satin a job as a cabdriver; a few years later, he decided to make a documentary about Satin and some other old friends. Klores co-directed "The Boys of 2nd Street Park," which will air on Showtime in September. After twenty years in P.R., Klores says, he found himself "very busy and very frustrated" and needing to somehow assess his own life. "The film was never to be about the park, about basketball, or about Brooklyn," he says. "It was really about what happens to people."

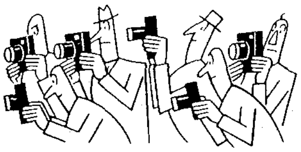
Klores calls Satin and Klein "the Romeo and Juliet of the counterculture," and the film suggests that, despite thirty years apart, the embers of their romance still flicker. At the pickup-game reunion in Second Street Park that ends the documentary, Klein arrives late and rushes over to Satin, who is drenched in perspiration—she wails, "You always hug me sweating!"—and then they walk off, arm in arm, to get ice cream.

The offscreen story is a bit less neat. "We had agreed over the phone that she would be my date for the weekend," Satin said the other day, referring to the reunion last April. "And everyone on that basketball court expected us to get together and live happily ever after. There was a tingling, silly pressure, some nonsensical notions: when is she going to hug me, kiss me? We did hug, we did kiss—and then she called her husband and had him show up at the dinner that night with their son, so she wouldn't have to be my date."

Klein lives in Rumson, New Jersey, with her husband, Dr. Ed Ryterband, who's a corporate psychologist, and their two children. Her smile is still a showstopper, but she has crow's-feet now and a short, sensible permanent. She viewed the project in less wistful terms. "All those old guys out there determined to act like they were still seventeen," she said, describing the on-court reunion. She smiled and shook her head. "I kept thinking, Hey, time didn't freeze for *me*."

—*Tad Friend*

THE BOARDS
SKIN DEEP



"Mamacita," "tentpole," "Madonna with meatballs," "a li'l bit of all right": these are among the many synonyms for "hot chick" offered in a film clip that introduces "Pieces (of Ass)," a new downtown theatre production about so-called "hot-chick angst." The play's cast members—a dozen regulars, plus a rotating celebrity "CenterPIECE"—are all in the classic bombshell mode, by the design of the director, Brian Howie, who, although he has a steady girlfriend, seems to have wanted to spend the past four months with as many pretty women as possible. His casting-call ad, placed in *Back Stage* in early March, read, "Seeking: actresses who are seriously beautiful, hot, sexy, pretty, gorgeous, stunning (and you know it)."

"I used to notice that the better-looking the girl the more trouble they seemed to get involved with," Howie, or Piecemaster, as he is known backstage, said the other day. "And I noticed that the blacks were having their say, the gays were having their say, the feminists were having their say, everybody except the people who appeal to me the most as a thirty-five-year-old guy—the hot chicks." He had a beach tan and was smiling mischievously, dressed in a suit with an open shirt, while drinking vodka at the show's opening-night party, held at Mannahatta, a club on the Bowery, as the cast posed for pictures outside.

To be fair, the women in "Pieces (of Ass)" are feminists, of a "Charlie's Angels"–Third Wave sort, each delivering an original "empowering" monologue, in the grand chick-soliloquy tradition of Molly Bloom and Eve Ensler, and, since the show's stated aim is to "go beneath the façade," wearing little in the way of an outer layer. (There's no nudity, but West Coast audiences beware: Howie says, "The Los Angeles version will be significantly more maximized.")

"Feel free to judge this book by its cover," one Piece who's sick of being evaluated for her personality says. The troubles associated with feminine beauty, as described in the play, are, for the most part, fairly banal: putting up with insecure guys, suitors who propose too readily, boyfriends who are themselves hot and thus steal the spotlight.

At the party, Howie, who admits, "I'm the guy in the monologues—the things they talk about, I've *been* that guy," tried offering some insight gained from his new behind-the-scenes perspective. "They're harder to figure out than you could imagine," he said. "We have a lot of costume issues. Like, I'll suggest 'Why don't you try a different pair of pants?' and then they start to cry. The insecurities come out, you know?

"On any given day, three of them are fighting with their boyfriends," he continued. Then he raised his voice an octave and mimicked a whine: " 'I can't work today.' "

"I always joke that the show should be called '*Pains* in the Ass,' " he said. "I try not to hang out with them anymore. I just can't take it." (The angst of being Piecemaster's girlfriend has thus abated somewhat: "Initially, she felt threatened, but I complained about them so much that now she's fine with it.") "The mind of a pretty girl," he said, shaking his head and rolling his eyes. "I don't know. They're all crazy."

Trishelle Cannatella, the celebrity centerpiece of the evening (she starred in MTV's "Real World: Las Vegas"), arrived, wearing a short skirt and a snug black top. "Women are jealous creatures," she said, leaning in close to whisper into the ear of a male partygoer. "They're jealous of the fact that I'm confident." She stopped to take a sip of her Red Bull and vodka, and then leaned in again. "But I think ugly women can be confident, too."

Hot Chicks

A couple of days after the "Pieces (of Ass)" opening, another famous hot chick, Traci Lords, showed up in the East Village to celebrate the publication of her book, "Underneath It All," which describes her experiences with sexual abuse, the *Penthouse* centerfold, and porn stardom, all before she turned eighteen. Lords, who is now thirty-five, arrived at Global 33, on Second Avenue, at around eight-thirty and was immediately surrounded by three dozen men with cameras and zoom lenses.

"Hey, Traci, look at me!" "Over here, Traci!" "Traci, that's hot!" Lords eventually held up a copy of her book in front of her face, as if for protection. A minute later, she looked over her shoulder at a large man and mouthed, "Help!" She was escorted to a booth in the back of the bar, for a champagne toast with a few friends. As the horde of photographers continued to shoot away, Lords took a moment to reflect on the issue of hot-chick angst. "I think it is a wonderful thing, as a woman, to be blessed with beauty," she said. "I think you should embrace beauty. It's a blessing, not a curse."

—*Ben McGrath*

ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

THE SYRIAN BET

Did the Bush Administration burn a useful source on Al Qaeda?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

On the night of June 18th, Task Force 20, an American Special Operations team stationed in Iraq, expanded its operations dozens of miles inside Syria. Military intelligence had observed large numbers of cars and trucks speeding toward the border, and senior officers suspected that the vehicles were carrying fleeing members of the Iraqi leadership. Communications intercepts had indicated that there were more Syrian soldiers congregated along the border than usual, including some officers. The military concluded, according to a senior Administration official, that "something down there was going on." Two days earlier, one of Saddam Hussein's closest aides, Abid Hamid Mahmud, had been captured, and told his interrogators that he and Saddam's two sons had sought refuge in Syria but were turned back. Although the Syrian government denied knowledge of the brothers' whereabouts, the military was now ready to cross the border to stop any future flight attempts.

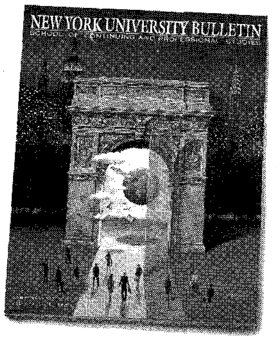
Sometime after midnight, Army helicopters and Bradley Fighting Vehicles attacked two groups of cars heading into Syria, triggering enormous explosions and fireballs that lit up the night sky. A gas station and nearby homes were destroyed. Task Force 20 sped across the border into Syria. Five Syrian guards were injured and flown to Iraq in American helicopters for medical treatment, and several other Syrians were seized, handcuffed, and detained before being released.

Pentagon officials subsequently praised the nighttime mission. "I'm confident we had very good intelligence," Air Force General Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at a Pentagon news conference on June 24th. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told reporters, "There were reasons, good reasons, to believe that the vehicles that were violating the curfew that existed in that area were doing it for reasons other than normal commerce." Asked if he believed that senior Iraqi leaders had been killed in the raid, Rumsfeld said, "We're trying to find out."

In fact, according to current and former American military and diplomatic officials, the operation was a fiasco in which as many as eighty people—occupants of the cars and trucks as well as civilians living nearby—were killed. The vehicles, it turned out, were being used to smuggle gasoline. The Syrian government said little publicly about the violation of its sovereignty, even when the Pentagon delayed the repatriation of the injured Syrian border guards—reporters were told that the guards had not been fully interrogated—for ten days.

Weeks later, questions about the raid remained: Why had American forces crossed the border? And why had the Syrian response been so muted? An American consultant who recently returned from Iraq said, "I don't mind so much what we did, but it's the incompetence with which we did it." A senior adviser to the Pentagon noted that the people who were killed had "put themselves into the gray area" by smuggling fuel across the border. "The troops were trying to work with actionable intelligence," the official said. "You might make the same mistake." This month, two retired veterans of the C.I.A.'s clandestine service, Vincent Cannistraro and Philip Giraldi, who now consult on intelligence issues, noted in a newsletter for their private clients that the attacks had been based on "fragmentary and ambiguous" information and had led to increased tension between Rumsfeld and the C.I.A. director, George Tenet.

Tenet's involvement was significant. American intelligence and State Department officials have told me that by early 2002 Syria had emerged as one of the C.I.A.'s most effective intelligence allies in the fight against Al Qaeda, providing an outpouring of information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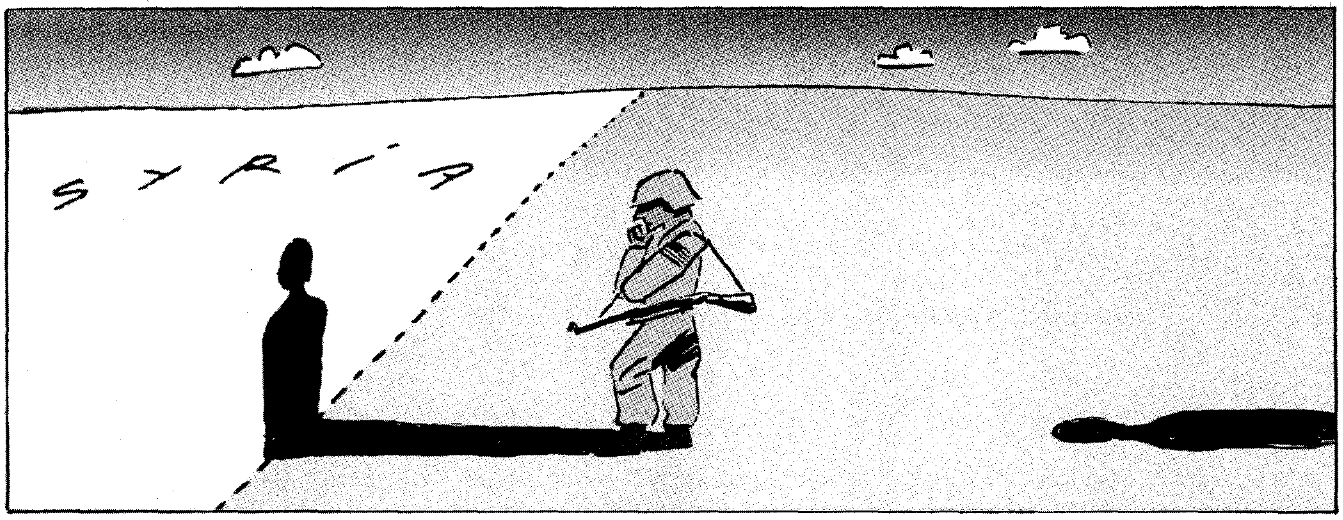
that came to an end only with the invasion of Iraq. (A number of the details of the raid and the intelligence relationship were reported by U.P.I. on July 16th.) Tenet had become one of Syria's champions in the interagency debate over how to deal with its government. His antagonists include civilians in the Pentagon who viewed Syria, despite its intelligence help, as part of the problem. "Tenet has prevented all kinds of action against Syria," one diplomat with knowledge of the interagency discussions told me.



The Syrians wanted a diplomatic back channel to Washington, but the Pentagon, preoccupied with Iraq, was vehemently opposed.

GUY BILLOUT

Syria is one of seven nations listed by the State Department as sponsors of terrorism. It has been on the list since 1979, in large part because of its public support for Hezbollah, the radical Islamic party that controls much of southern Lebanon. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for, among other acts, the 1983 bombing of the American Marine barracks in Beirut, which left two hundred and forty-one Americans dead; it was implicated in the 1984 kidnapping of William Buckley, the C.I.A.'s Beirut station chief, who was tortured and murdered; and it has been linked to bombings of Israeli targets in Argentina. Syria has also allowed Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, two groups that have staged numerous suicide bombings inside Israel, to maintain offices in Damascus.

Nevertheless, after September 11th the Syrian leader, Bashar Assad, initiated the delivery of Syrian intelligence to the United States. The Syrians had compiled hundreds of files on Al Qaeda, including dossiers on the men who participated—and others who wanted to participate—in the September 11th attacks. Syria also penetrated Al Qaeda cells throughout the Middle East and in Arab exile communities throughout Europe. That data began flowing to C.I.A. and F.B.I. operatives.

Syria had accumulated much of its information because of Al Qaeda's ties to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic terrorists who have been at war with the secular Syrian government for more than two decades. Many of the September 11th hijackers had operated out of cells in Aachen and Hamburg, where Al Qaeda was working with the Brotherhood. In the late nineties, Mohammed Atta and other Al Qaeda members, including Mohammed Haydar Zammar, who is believed to have been one of the organization's top recruiters, worked on occasion at a German firm called Tatex Trading. Tatex was infiltrated by Syrian intelligence in the eighties; one of its shareholders was Mohammed Majed Said, who ran the Syrian intelligence directorate from 1987 to 1994. Zammar is now in Syrian custody.

Within weeks of the September 11th attacks, the F.B.I. and the C.I.A, with Syria's permission, began intelligence-gathering operations in Aleppo, near the Turkish border. Aleppo was the subject of Mohammed Atta's dissertation on urban planning, and he travelled there twice in the mid-nineties. "At every stage in Atta's journey is the Muslim Brotherhood," a former C.I.A. officer who served undercover in Damascus told me. "He went through Spain in touch with the Brotherhood in Hamburg."

Syria also provided the United States with intelligence about future Al Qaeda plans. In one instance, the Syrians learned that Al Qaeda had penetrated the security services of Bahrain and had arranged for a glider loaded with explosives to be flown into a building at the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters there. Flynt Leverett, a former C.I.A. analyst who served until early this year on the National Security Council and is now a fellow at the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, told me that Syria's help "let us thwart an operation that, if carried out, would have killed a lot of Americans." The Syrians also helped the United States avert a suspected plot against an American target in Ottawa.

Syria's efforts to help seemed to confound the Bush Administration, which was fixated on Iraq. According to many officials I spoke to, the Administration was ill prepared to take advantage of the situation and unwilling to reassess its relationship with Assad's government. Leverett told me that "the quality and quantity of information from Syria exceeded the Agency's expectations." But, he said, "from the Syrians' perspective they got little in return for it."

For thirty years, Hafez Assad, Bashar Assad's father, ruled Syria through the socialist Baath Party. The journalist Thomas Friedman has described him as looking "like a man who had long ago been stripped of any illusions about human nature." He dealt with his opponents brutally. In 1982, after years of increasingly violent terrorist attacks throughout Syria, Hafez Assad ordered

"Hold on, this is the stick—I asked for the ball."

a massive military assault on the Muslim Brotherhood in the northern city of Hama. He saw the group as a threat to his control of Syria, and his forces, showing little mercy, killed at least five thousand people, many of them civilians, in a monthlong battle that left the city in ruins. In 1994, his oldest son and presumed heir, Basil, was killed in an automobile accident. Bashar, then twenty-eight, was studying ophthalmology in London, where his wife, Asmaa, worked in the executive-training program at J. P. Morgan. They returned to Damascus in 1994, and shortly after the death of his father, in June, 2000, Bashar took over the Presidency.

Unlike his father, Bashar is routinely depicted in Western newspapers not as ruthless but as unsure, inexperienced, and unable to control a corrupt Old Guard. Last month, I visited him at his office in Damascus. Tall, gangly, and seemingly shy and eager to please, Assad was waiting at the door for me. He offset his tentative and somewhat fussy manner with humor. He was frank about his reasons for speaking to me: he wanted to change his image, and the image of his country. "September 11th was like out of a Hollywood movie—beyond anyone's imagination," he said. "But it was not surprising as a concept. We actually experienced innocents being killed on our streets, and we know how it feels." Syria had sent official expressions of sympathy, backed by offers to share intelligence. "We thought Al Qaeda was not different than the Muslim Brotherhood as a state of mind," Assad said.

"For us," Assad said, September 11th "was a good opportunity. The need to coöperate was very self-evident, and it was in our interest. It was also a way to improve relations." Syria hoped to get off the list of state sponsors of terrorism; its case was based in part on the fact, acknowledged by the State Department, that it hadn't been directly implicated in a terrorist act since 1986. On a practical level, removal from the list would make Syria eligible for trade and other economic aid—and arms sales—from which it is now barred.

In interviews and public statements, Assad has tried to draw a distinction between international terrorists and those he called part of the "resistance" in Israel and the occupied territories, including young Palestinian suicide bombers. It is a distinction that few in the Bush Administration would endorse. Syria's enmity toward Israel has been unrelenting, as has its criticism of the United States for its support of Israel. In a typical comment, made in late March to *Al Safir*, a Lebanese newspaper, Assad declared, "No one among us trusts Israel; not the Syrians, not any other Arabs. . . . We must be very careful. Treachery and threats have always been Israeli characteristics. Through its existence, Israel always poses a threat."

Assad and his advisers—many of whom are his father's cronies—had hoped that their coöperation in the hunt for Al Qaeda would allow them to improve and redefine their relations with the United States. Among other things, the Syrians wanted a back channel to Washington—that is, a private means of communicating directly with the President and his key aides. But there was a major obstacle: Syria's support for Hezbollah. "Hezbollah may be the A team of terrorists and maybe Al Qaeda is actually the B team," Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said in a speech last September.

Last fall, however, General Hassan Khalil, the head of Syria's military intelligence, told Washington that Syria was willing to discuss imposing some restrictions on the military and political activities of Hezbollah. The General requested that the C.I.A. be the means of back-channel communication. A senior Syrian foreign-ministry official I met argued that a back channel was crucial because while Assad might be able to take quick action against Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a public stance against Hezbollah would be impossible. "He can't do it," the official said, adding that the leader of Hezbollah, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, is enormously popular in Syria.

The proposal went nowhere. A former State Department official told me that the C.I.A., ecstatic about the high level of coöperation with Syrian intelligence, "didn't want to destroy the 'happy talk' about Al Qaeda by dealing with all the other troubling issues in the back channel." The State Department, he added, did not like the Agency's having access to U.S.-Syrian diplomatic correspondence. And the Pentagon, preoccupied with the Iraq war and ideologically hostile to Syria, vehemently opposed a back channel.

"The intelligence coöperation on Al Qaeda *was* important and effective," said Martin Indyk, who served as Ambassador to Israel in the Clinton Administration and is now director of the Saban Center. "But the Syrians thought it would compensate for all their other games with Iraq and the Palestinian terror organizations, and it doesn't." On the issue of shutting down the Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices in Damascus, Indyk said, "They're playing around." He asked, "Why are they doing it despite our anger? One, they think we're going to grow short of breath in Iraq and fail with the Middle East road map. So they're biding their time. And, two, there doesn't seem to be much consequence for not heeding our warnings."

Itamar Rabinovich, a former Israeli Ambassador to Washington, who headed the Israeli delegation during the ill-fated peace talks with Hafez Assad in the mid-nineties, acknowledged that he was aware of the key Syrian intelligence role in the war against Al Qaeda, but he made it clear that Israel's distrust of Syria remains acute. Rabinovich wondered aloud whether, given the quality of their sources, the Syrians had had advance information about the September 11th plot—and failed to warn the United States. He said that under the elder Assad the Syrians had been "masters of straddling the line." He added, "Hafez negotiated with us, and he supported Hezbollah. The son is not as adept as the father, who could keep five balls in the air at the same time. Bashar can only handle three—if that. He has good intentions, but he's not in control. He can't deliver." For that reason, Rabinovich believed, Israel has urged Washington not to open the back channel to Assad. For the Syrians, he added, "the best channel is a back channel—it's ideal. They are then not embarrassed in public and they buy themselves some time."

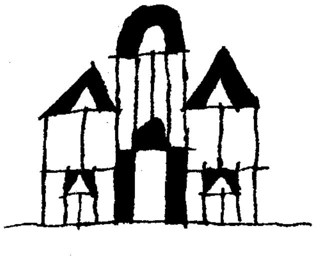
Many of those I spoke to said that there had been an apparent shift in Hezbollah's behavior—one that may have created an opening which the Bush Administration has yet to exploit. "With the exception of exchange of fire over the Shebaa Farms"—a disputed area on the Lebanese border—"it's been quiet since the Israeli evacuation in 2000," said Richard W. Murphy, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, who served as Ambassador to Syria in the nineteen-seventies. "The fact is Hezbollah knows its limits." Murphy pointed to Hezbollah's deepening involvement in the Lebanese government: Nasrallah's group now has twelve seats in the parliament. Many in Pentagon circles and in Israel attribute Hezbollah's silence to America's swift defeat of the Iraqi regime. "The U.S. is now in the Middle East, and east of Israel," a retired Israeli intelligence officer told me. As a result, another Israeli official said, "Hezbollah is playing defense today."

Michel Samaha, Lebanon's minister of information, told me that Hezbollah has stabilized daily life in southern Lebanon, by controlling and monitoring the sometimes violent activities of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in squalid refugee camps scattered through the area. He argued that America was making "a foolish mistake" by not trying to engage Hezbollah. The group, Samaha said, complied with Syria's insistence that it prevent would-be Palestinian suicide bombers from crossing the border into Israel. Rabinovich also said that Hezbollah had become more "careful" in its actions against Israel.

Martin Indyk questioned how much credit Syria should get for the change. "Nasrallah independently figured it was a good time to quiet things down, well before the war in Iraq," he says. "I don't think the Syrians were against it, but I wouldn't rush to credit them for the cooling down. Hezbollah, like Hamas, has read the map much better than Bashar and has decided it makes sense to keep its head down, preserve its assets and resources, rebuild where it needs to, and wait for the next round."

I spoke with Nasrallah, who is in his early forties, over tea at his offices south of Beirut. In his speeches to the faithful, his language is laced with hostility toward Israel and the United States, and with rationalizations for suicide bombings. In his conversation with me, he said, "I used to believe that the Americans would need a year or two before the Iraqis begin protesting, but here they are doing it in just two months, not two years." Armed resistance, he said, was inevitable: "The history of Iraq says that it is possible to occupy Iraq, but one can't stay there for long." (On the eve of the war, he had said that American troops should expect "martyrdom operations" and that "Death to America was, is, and will stay our slogan.")

Nasrallah emphasized that he was not seeking a confrontation with the United States. Because of Hezbollah's ability to disrupt a deal between the Israelis and Palestinians, I asked Nasrallah about his view of the renewed talks. He hesitated a moment and declared, "At the end, this is primarily a Palestinian matter. I, like any other person, may consider what is happening to be right or wrong. . . . I may have a different assessment, but at the end of the road no one can go to war on behalf of the Palestinians, even if that one is not in agreement with what the Palestinians agreed on. Of course, it would bother us that Jerusalem goes to Israel."



I asked, "But if there was a deal?"

"Let it happen," he answered. "I would not say O.K. I would say nothing."

In midwinter, despite intense American pressure, Bashar Assad decided that Syria would not support the invasion of Iraq. Coöperation on Al Qaeda was now a secondary issue.

In our interview, Assad said that his opposition to the war was based on principle. "Could the Iraqi people ignore an American occupation because they hated Saddam? The United States doesn't understand the society—not even the simplest analysis." His decision was also driven by internal politics. America had demanded that Syria monitor and curtail the heavy flow into Iraq of smuggled arms and other military necessities from Syrian entrepreneurs—many with high-level Baath Party connections. "The U.S. had satellite photographs of the equipment and information on high-ranking Syrian officials," a foreign diplomat with close ties to Washington said. "Bashar did not cut it off. The United States got furious."

Even Assad's most hopeful supporters told me that it was not clear how much control he had over his own government. Murhaf Jouejati, a Syrian-born political scientist now at Washington's Middle East Institute, told me, "Bashar is trying to reach out to the people, and the people like him, but what stands in the way is the financially corrupt state."

Hafez Assad supported the first Gulf War, and Dennis Ross, who was President Clinton's special envoy to the Middle East, said that Bashar Assad had "bet wrong" in refusing to support America this time. "He got nervous after the war and sent a series of messages saying he wants peace," Ross said. He added, "Assad has to know that he won't get by on the cheap—he truly must cut off support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Islamic Jihad." But, Ross went on, if he did so the U.S. should reward him "by renewing talks on the Golan Heights"—land Israel occupied in 1967. Ross said that, so far, there was no indication that the Administration was pursuing such an approach.

Instead, in late March Rumsfeld said that Syria would be held accountable for its actions. He accused Syria of supplying Iraq with night-vision goggles and other military goods. He also suggested that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction might be stashed there. Syria denied the assertions, and members of the intelligence community I spoke to characterized the evidence against Syria as highly questionable.

The Syrians were rattled by the threats, in part because many in and close to the Bush Administration have been urging regime change in Damascus for years. In 2000, the Middle East Forum, a conservative Washington think tank, issued a study offering many of the same reasons for taking military action against Syria that were later invoked against Iraq. "The Defense Department pushed for the hard line on Syria," a former State Department official told me. "I think Rummy was at least testing the waters—to see how far he could go—but the White House was not ready." The former official added that Condoleezza Rice, the national-security adviser, "is not going to sit on the Pentagon the way she'd have to in order to give the policy of engaging Syria politically a chance. She won't until the President has made his preferences clear. This kind of policy drift on Syria would be sustainable for another Administration, but Bush can't take it indefinitely. He's defined the war on terrorism in theological terms. A President who says 'You're either with us or against us' can't let policy drift. Rumsfeld's approach is to tell the President, 'You do in Syria what you promised to do.' "

In Washington, there was anger about what many officials saw as the decision of the Bush Administration to choose confrontation with Syria over day-to-day help against Al Qaeda. In a sense, the issue was not so much Syria itself as a competition between ideology and practicality—and between the drive to go to war in Iraq and the need to fight terrorism—which has created a deep rift in the Bush Administration. The collapse of the liaison relationship has left many C.I.A. operatives especially frustrated. "The guys are unbelievably pissed that we're blowing this away," a former high-level intelligence official told me. "There was a great channel at Aleppo. The Syrians were a lot more willing to help us, but they"—Rumsfeld and his colleagues—"want to go in there next."

"There is no security relationship now," a Syrian foreign-ministry official told me. "It saddens us as much as it saddens you. We could give you information on organizations that we don't think should exist. If we help you on Al Qaeda, we are helping ourselves." He added, almost plaintively, that if Washington had agreed to discuss certain key issues in a back channel, "we'd have given you more. But when you publicly try to humiliate a country it'll become stubborn."

Robert Baer, a retired C.I.A. officer who served in Syria and is the author of a new book, "Sleeping with the Devil," on Washington's relationship with the Saudis, agreed that the Syrians had more to offer. "The Syrians know that the Saudis were involved in the financing of the Muslim Brotherhood, and they for sure know the names," Baer told me.

"Up through January of 2003, the coöperation was topnotch," a former State Department official said. "Then we were going to do Iraq, and some people in the Administration got heavy-handed. They wanted Syria to get involved in operational stuff having nothing to do with Al Qaeda and everything to do with Iraq. It was something Washington wanted from the Syrians, and they didn't want to do it."

Differences over Iraq "destroyed the Syrian bet," said Ghassan Salamé, a professor of international relations at Paris University who served, until April, as Lebanon's minister of culture. "They bet that they could somehow find the common ground with America. They bet all on coöperation with America." A Defense Department official who has been involved in Iraq policy told me that the Syrians, despite their differences with Washington, had kept Hezbollah quiet during the war in Iraq. This was, he said, "a signal to us, and we're throwing it away. The Syrians are trying to communicate, and we're not listening." ♦

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LETTER FROM ST. PETERSBURG

INVENTED CITY

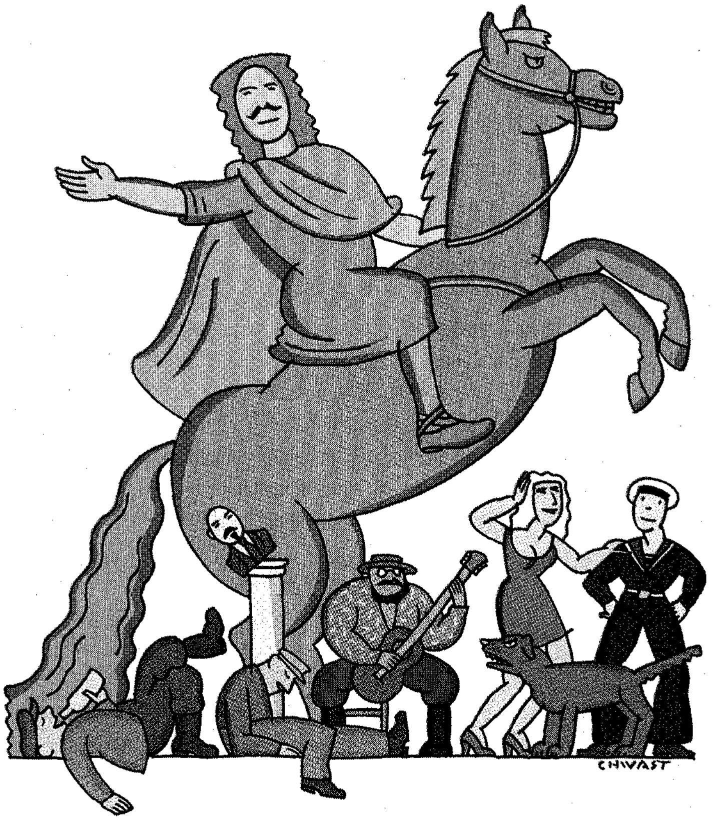
Peter the Great's vision, three hundred years on.

BY IAN FRAZIER

Growing up, the future Russian tsar who would be called Peter the Great studied geography on a globe taller than a man. The globe showed what was known about the earth's surface at the time—the late seventeenth century—with rivers and coastlines in good detail. Peter was a tall boy who would become a six-foot-seven-inch man. I imagine him striding around the globe on his long legs acquainting himself with it, paying particular attention to the vast expanse his dynasty ruled, the great curve of Russia going halfway around and ending in the unexplored vagueness of the North Pacific and Asia. When, as tsar, Peter wanted a new capital for his empire, I imagine him consulting this globe or another. He looks at the empire's far northwest corner and sees a swampy river mouth where his landlocked people can pop through to the Baltic and the sea lanes of Europe and the world. The spot is where the Neva River empties into the Gulf of Finland; technically, it belongs to Sweden, but never mind. His long, bony finger descends and hits it, emphatically: "*There.*"

Dostoyevsky, who lived most of his life in the capital Peter called into being, said that St. Petersburg was the most premeditated city in the world. Probably no other city, and certainly no national capital before in history, existed first as a theoretical point indicated on a map. St. Petersburg is a wide-angle city of sea-level horizontals beneath a sky like a drive-in movie theatre screen stretching infinitely upward. Sometimes, when I'm walking in the city, Peter's index finger is almost palpable, coming down again ("There!") through that ceilingless sky.

Peter founded St. Petersburg in 1703. He crushed tens of thousands of people and made his country groan getting it partly built. Serfs requisitioned from all over Russia labored on it, carrying earth in their hands or in their shirts. They drove wooden pilings into the marshy ground for the city to rest on, laid out avenues, dug canals. During the work, unknown numbers of them died. By 1710, Peter's military victories over the Swedes had secured his claim to the mouth of the Neva, and he moved his court from Moscow to St. Petersburg. He ordered merchants, carpenters, tradesmen, and many noble families to move there, too. They obeyed, though building new houses on the banks of a flood-prone river was not their idea.



People had come to celebrate but weren't sure what the celebration was.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

It all could have turned out horribly. And in fact the city has had plenty of floods, fires, and outbreaks of disease in its three hundred years, not to mention the even worse catastrophes caused by man. Its drinking water has never been safe, and remains unsafe today. But Peter, besides being a brutal despot, was also a genius, with energy, enterprise, and good taste. The city he made is a work of art, one man's willed vision, to which countless other gifted people, famous and otherwise, have added through the centuries. Even the Bolsheviks, who moved the capital back to Moscow in 1918, helped preserve by their neglect this city they renamed Leningrad. Today, the center of the city, with its canals and its granite-encased Neva River shoreline—"like a vessel, so full that its brim disappears under the water, which is ready to flow over on every side," in the words of a Frenchman who saw it in 1839—still expresses the big picture that Peter had in mind.

Oceanic light continues to pour through this opening he crowbarred into the corner of Russia, just as he intended. To get the full effect of his vision, though, it's best to ride in one of the tour boats that take visitors along the city's canals. As the boat winds through, what you see is a few feet away, in all the intricacies of the canal-side buildings whose histories the guide describes. But at the end of the canal the boat emerges, unexpectedly, into the Gulf of Finland, and the view that had been up close enlarges to a seascape with its horizon many miles in the distance. This instant acceleration of imaginative reach is the geographic reason for the city. Emotionally, the response is a sensation of possibility, as if you were a suddenly unhooded falcon.

Since 2000, I've been going to St. Petersburg to do research for a book. I love to go there. Of course, I know the city only in its post-Soviet version; my Russian friends who grew up there and now live in America still call it Leningrad. In other Russian places I've been, the surroundings sometimes make me disoriented and dizzy, and I have to take to my bed for a while. St. Petersburg is more familiar and comfortable, somehow. The predictable American brand names glow along its thoroughfares, as in any big target of our globalism. The music on the radio and in stores and restaurants is often American Top Forty oldies, some of them remakes sung phonetically. The billboards for American rock bands soothe me, too, because usually the groups they promote, now forgotten in America, were popular when I was just out of high school. If you've wondered what happened to Alice Cooper or King Crimson, you could see them in St. Petersburg.

Another reason that I feel at home in St. Petersburg is literary. So many books I admire take place here, so many great writers lived here. Two great American writers—Vladimir Nabokov and Joseph Brodsky—were born and grew up here. And, as for nonfiction, the most spectacular ideological-historical train wreck of the twentieth century—the Bolshevik revolution—began here. The city, with its imperial scale and long perspectives, made a perfect stage set for larger-than-life events that were imaginary, real, or in between. Ghosts of famous characters, fictional and non-, occupy the city everywhere. On the street in St. Petersburg, I'm in ordinary, day-to-day reality and in heightened, extra-vivid, literary reality simultaneously.

In late May, the city celebrated its three-hundredth anniversary. I'd known it was coming, because as far back as January, 2001, there were ads in the metro saying "To St. Petersburg's 300th Anniversary—29 Months." In the newspapers, there and elsewhere, I'd read about the renovation the city was undergoing, and the billion and a half dollars or more that it would cost. On a summer visit, I'd detoured around whole sections of the city that were under reconstruction. I wanted to see how it had all turned out, so on May 27th—supposedly the day, in 1703, when the first permanent structure was begun on an island in the Neva—I flew to St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport. The sparrows flying around inside the concourse were the same as always, but the strong smell of fresh Russian industrial paint was new.

The taxi-drivers who congregate outside the airport, always a suspect bunch, were now wearing white shirts, official-looking I.D. cards, and expressions of extreme trustworthiness. As I stood by the curb, one of them approached me and said that I must take a cab to the city, because the airport was not served by public transportation. I pointed to the No. 13 bus just pulling up nearby and said that, on the contrary, I could take that bus to the Moskovskaia metro station and then ride the metro to my destination. Unfazed, he replied, "But you have luggage." I admitted that indeed I did have luggage. After some further conversation, I ended up riding with him, partly because of the luggage and partly because I got a kick out of how blithely he had lied.

I went to the apartment of my friend Lyuda, on Zagorodny Prospekt, near the city center. She is a childhood friend of my friend Sonya, in New Jersey. When I'm in town, Lyuda sometimes lets me stay in her apartment and moves temporarily to her dacha or to another apartment she has. She is a sweet-natured, blue-eyed, blond-haired woman in her fifties who, like many Russians, can walk indefinitely. After tea and snacks, we set out on a stroll to see what was going on. I mentioned to Lyuda how beautiful the weather was, and I understood her to reply that the government had sent airplanes to intercept some rainstorms that were heading this way from the east, and the airplanes had dropped chemicals on the clouds to prevent them from coming here. My Russian is shaky, and Lyuda speaks no English, so I wasn't sure I'd got that right.

But I had, as I later learned from the newspapers. Officials saw to everything, including the weather. A cloudless blue sky set off the newly regilded onion domes shining blindingly on the top of the Vladimirsky Cathedral as we went down Zagorodny. When we turned onto the newly laid mortised-granite sidewalk of the Nevsky Prospekt, St. Petersburg's storied main drag, the early-evening twilight (which at this time of year would last until nearly midnight) illuminated the repainted façades of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings with their rows of white columns and varied cherubim. The colors of the buildings' stucco, the pristine light blues and pale pinks and Easter yellows, are colors found only in

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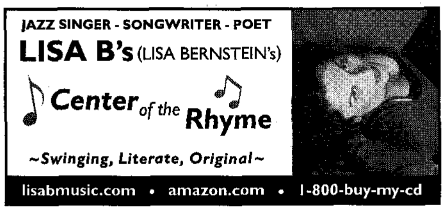
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MR. FEAR

He follows us, he keeps track.
Each day his lists are longer.
Here, death. And here,
something like it.

Mr. Fear, we say in our dreams,
what do you have for me tonight?
And he looks through his sack,
his black sack of troubles.

Maybe he smiles when he finds
the right one. Maybe he's sorry.
Tell me, Mr. Fear,
what must I carry

away from your dream.
Make it small, please.
Let it fit in my pocket,
let it fall through

the hole in my pocket.
Fear, let me have
a small brown bat
and a purse of crickets

like the ones I heard
singing last night
out there in the stubbly field
before I slept, and met you.

—*Lawrence Raab*

Russia. The buildings' past accumulations of cracks—a huge multitude that chronically inhabits St. Petersburg's walls, owing to the long winters and the maritime climate—had all been smoothed away.

Within a few blocks, the crowds heading down to the Neva waterfront, site of the night's celebration, reached nearpedlock density. There were families trying to stay together, boys poking each other with inflatable baseball bats that commemorated the anniversary, guys with ear-splitting noisemakers, cat-eyed girls in low-rider jeans, and muscular young men whose hair, skin, and eyes were all the same pale shade. Many people carried big bottles of Baltika beer. Turning off the Nevsky, the crowd went through the arch leading to Palace Square. This is the immense open square behind the Winter Palace—now The Hermitage museum. In the past, tens of thousands of troops have assembled in this square with room left over.

On a building front at the western end of the square hung a giant banner bearing the face of Peter the Great. At closer range, the portrait was seen to be a collage of many smaller pictures of St. Petersburg scenes. That made it different, sort of, from the other giant faces, the Stalins and Lenins, that have gazed from that same vantage at former celebrations. Next to Peter's face on the banner was the exhortation, in tall red letters, "Flaunt your beauty, city of Peter, and stand steadfast, like Russia." The sentence was enclosed in quotation marks, but had no attribution. In the middle of the square, the Alexander Column, one of the largest columns in the world, rose to an altitude even higher than the banner. Tsar Nicholas I erected the column in 1832 to honor Alexander I, his brother, who had presided over the Russian defeat of Napoleon. The massive cylindrical stone with its angel of victory on top made its wordless statement as forcefully as always, in collaboration with St. Petersburg's towering sky.

When Lyuda and I got to the riverfront, hundreds of thousands of people were milling around. We went onto a bridge over the Neva to see if a promised fireworks show would develop. Our neighbors, cheek-by-jowl close, were a young woman with a single large freckle on her face, a young man with beeswax in one nostril, possibly to stop up a bloody nose, and a police officer just out of puberty, whose job was to keep people from pitching over the rail into the water. Lyuda asked, "What's going to happen?" The policeman, self-consciously trying to keep his lips in a straight line, said nothing. "I don't know, but something will," the young woman with the freckle said. For an hour, we stood and watched the flags flap along the Neva and the swallows swoop through the empty air. People kept crowding onto the bridge until it seemed to sag. Stories my Russian friends had told me about the hundreds who were trampled at Stalin's funeral came back to me. Finally, we gave up and eeled our way out of there.

Lyuda had to work the next morning, so we said goodbye and she went to where she was staying. I walked along the river, to Falconet's famous "Bronze Horseman" statue of Peter. Critics in former centuries have called it an unstable-looking production held upright only by the extra support of the serpent that Peter's horse is stepping on. The statue has, however, remained standing where it is since 1782, a real achievement if you consider the short lives of many Russian statues.

Now partyers were gathering around it and popping champagne corks. Almost everyone here in the ebbing and flowing crowd seemed to be carrying a bottle; when Russian drinkers walk together, they put their arms around each other's shoulders, so that if one loses his footing all may share in the experience of falling down.

At ten-thirty, a few fireworks went off over the Neva, but since it was still almost broad daylight their effect failed. A laser show that followed also did not completely work, because the smoke on which the lasers were projected kept blowing away in the brisk wind over the river. "Better to stay home and watch on television," a woman passing by said. The crowd began to disperse, and I drifted with it. Then more fireworks boomed, and streams of people pushed and ran back to where they could see them. The sound of running feet, the yells of near-panic, and the strident bursts from the policemen's bullhorns evoked similar but much scarier disturbances in the city's revolutionary past. When I looked again, the sounds seemed right, but the light was all wrong. The noir darks and searchlight whites of the October Revolution could not have survived in the city's long midsummer luminescence: for proper visuals, the revolution could take place only in the encroaching winter darkness of October.

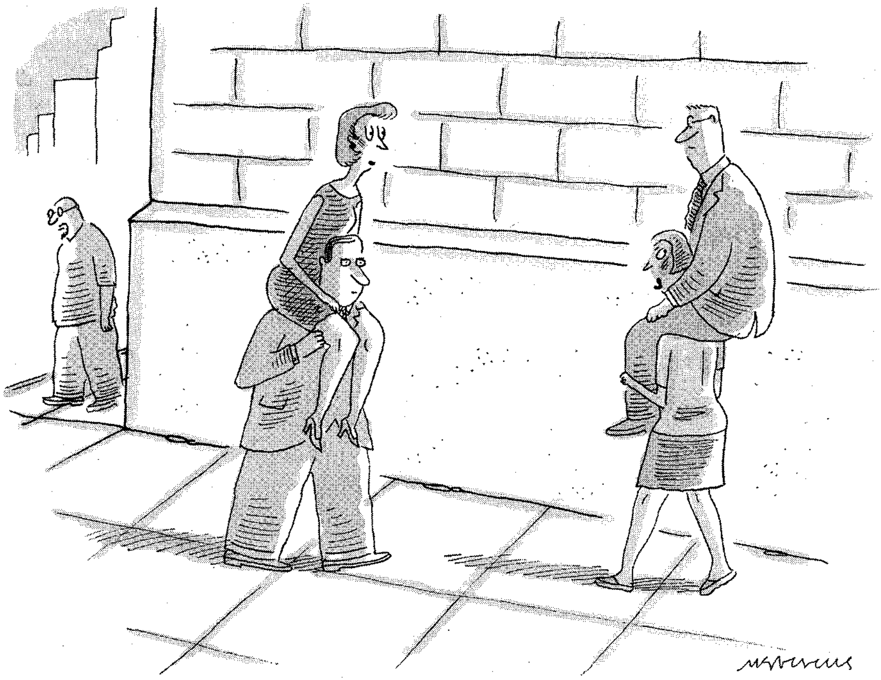
People had come tonight to celebrate, but they weren't sure what the celebration was, or whether it had even occurred. And yet they stayed, marking the moment's significance by their vast numbers and their patient presence. At midnight, I looked up the Nevsky Prospekt, which is wider than some streets are long, and it was filled from one side to the other with people as far as I could see. A million and a half had turned out that night, the news later said. Some were laughing, singing, calling to each other. Again and again came the sound of empty cans or bottles being kicked along the pavement and spinning end over end. I heard no language but Russian spoken the whole night.

A day or two later, I was walking on Rubinshtein Street, a block off Nevsky Prospekt. Middle of the day, prosperous part of town. A gray-and-white cat came strolling on the other side of the street. As the cat passed a narrow alley, a pack of dogs—a German-shepherd mutt, a beagle mutt, and a regular mutt—burst from it. The cat ran in that just-fast-enough way cats run, and it leaped neatly up to a first-floor window through which it had probably escaped often in the past. The weather had turned cool, however, and the window was closed. The cat bounced back onto the sidewalk and in an instant the dogs were upon it. The German-shepherd mutt clamped its jaws on the cat's neck, the beagle on the hind legs. The cat screamed, the dogs shook their heads eagerly, trying to tear it in half. A woman ran out from a doorway and shouted at the dogs, and they dropped the cat and scampered away. The cat, still hissing and snarling, its hind legs unable to move, dragged itself by its front paws under an iron driveway gate. A day or two later, I saw the same dogs loping along the sidewalk just as innocent as could be. I began to notice dogs wandering everywhere. All the Gypsies, prostitutes, beggars, and Hare Krishna people had been chased from the streets for the celebration, but apparently no one had thought to round up the packs of dogs.

Maybe people here don't see the dogs, or they see them without seeing them, the way one does with pigeons. Certain things I'd always assumed the locals didn't notice, however, had been dramatically changed. The lawns and weedy places, for example—now they had been mowed. In Russia, grasses and weeds are usually allowed to grow so high that they obscure windows, giving most sub-Arctic Russian cities a jungly look in summertime. Even the median strips of unlovely four-lanes had been mowed and trimmed like fairways. Parks I had got used to as places reverting to bramble now had their topiary trimmed, and flower beds with low fences took over what had been hard-packed dirt shortcuts. And in the metro diligent souls had scraped off all the unauthorized little stick-on ads that formerly were thick on the light fixtures and rails beside the escalators. The scrape marks left behind were so fine and careful that they might have been done with fingernails.

As I rambled around, I made my usual pilgrimages to the city's literary sites: to Chyornaya Rechka (Black Creek), where Alexander Pushkin, Russia's most revered poet, fought his fatal duel; to the house where Vladimir Nabokov grew up; to the apartment (now a museum) of the Symbolist poet Alexander Blok, whose women fans were so crazy about him that they used to kiss the handle of his front door. The museum in the former apartment of the poet Anna Akhmatova was closed for reconstruction, but the exhibition hall on a floor below it had a show about the poet Joseph Brodsky, Akhmatova's youthful disciple, who later won the Nobel Prize and who died in 1996.

I looked at that show for a while and then walked to 24 Liteiny Prospekt, the apartment building where Brodsky and his parents moved in the nineteen-fifties, when he was a teen-ager. On the outside wall of the building, perhaps eight feet above the sidewalk, is a big memorial plaque to Brodsky and a bas-relief bust of him in profile. I was pleased to see a large bouquet of flowers stuck in a crevice between the plaque and the wall. (I might as well be honest



"Now, there's a relationship that's working!"

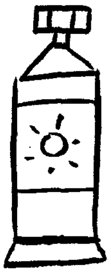
and add that Brodsky is a hero of mine.)

In 1985, Brodsky wrote an essay, "In a Room and a Half," about living here and about his mother and father. His descriptions had to rely on memory, and on photographs; he was writing in America, thirteen years after the Soviet government had exiled him. He never went back to Russia. The building still looks as he described it, except, of course, that his own profile is now a detail of the façade. His parents were never granted a visa to visit him. They never saw him again, though they did talk to him weekly on the phone; by 1985, they both had died. His remembrance of them is unsentimental, and beyond sad. In their faithful pursuit of a decent family life he saw a deeply subversive response to totalitarianism. "I am grateful to my mother and my father not only for giving me life but also for failing to bring up their child as a slave," he wrote.

In a documentary about Anna Akhmatova, Brodsky said that the Russian people care more about the spoken and the written word than other people do. He called Russia a "logocentric country" whose people love to talk and speculate and ponder and argue. With the authority of church and state and philosophy itself in considerable decline, he said, the poet in Russia is looked upon as a sage, if not as a saint. And indeed throughout St. Petersburg the memorials devoted to its writers do have the character of shrines with relics on display. At the various museums and exhibits honoring them, one may see Pushkin's short vest, Dostoyevsky's hat, Blok's pencil case, Akhmatova's collection of Venetian glass bottles, Nabokov's Scrabble set, and Brodsky's A.T. & T. calling card (#838 009 6148 8326).

In tsarist times, the newness of St. Petersburg and the riches of its emperors made it a great place for architects. Many of them were foreigners, among a large number of professionals of all kinds who came to the city and prospered as the benefits of Peter's open window to Europe flowed in both directions. A person could design buildings in St. Petersburg that were bigger and longer and more thematically consistent than was possible in more built-up places. The city's imperial pretensions, which based themselves on ideas about classical Rome, seemed to give an advantage to architects of Italian heritage. Bartolomeo Rastrelli's Winter Palace, with its tumult of statues overlooking the Neva from the rooftop like an Olympian mob, defined the city's Baroque style in the eighteenth century, just as Carlo Rossi's imposing neoclassical structures showed how the city hoped to be ranked among the world's capitals in the nineteenth.

For the three-hundredth anniversary, to remember the city's Italian architects, the city of Milan and the Italian government gave St. Petersburg busts of Rastrelli, Rossi, Giacomo Quarenghi, and Antonio Rinaldi, displayed on pedestals in a modest square by a fountain. A formal unveiling of the busts was scheduled for four o'clock one afternoon, part of a long list of anniversary events during late May. I went, because I've never seen an unveiling; when I got there just at four, however, the statues were all bare-faced, with no veils or officials or contemporary Italians anywhere. The heads of black marble looked lifelike, but disembodied, above the fresh gilt lettering of the names carved on the pedestals.

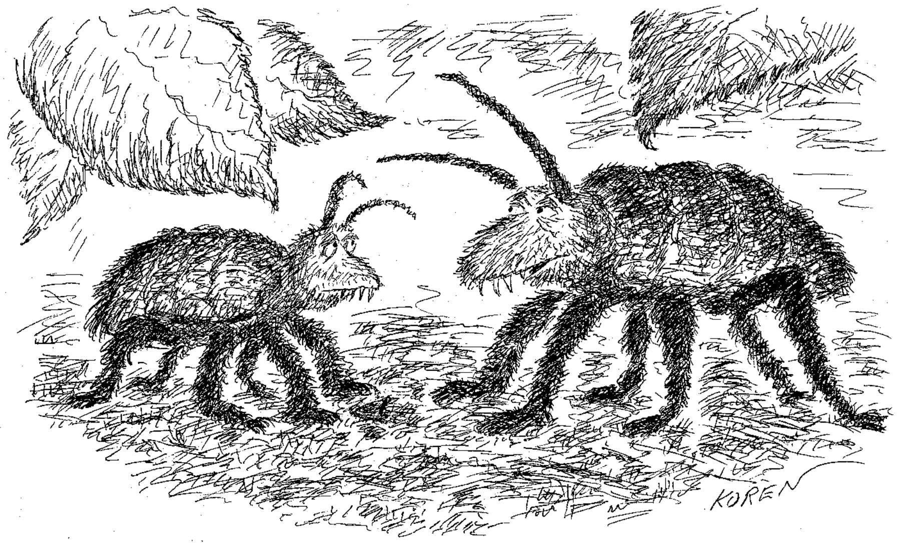


Across the street is a building called the Mikhailovsky Manege, which was rebuilt to Rossi's design in 1823-24. It's an elegant, spare structure faced in stucco of cream-yellow and white, and it extends far down the street. In the eighteen-hundreds, it served as a riding academy. Basically, it's a big hangar, like a train shed, enclosing space enough for cavalry exercises. More recently, it was an amusement arcade. Now, during the celebration, it had become a combination unofficial trade show and historical display. As I strolled through it I saw what you see at trade shows everywhere: electric cables taped to the floor with duct tape, rows of booths with people sitting at them, pieces of molded Styrofoam packing piled in corners, browsing exhibition-goers, and parents being dragged here and there by children. One booth promoted a German pharmaceutical company, another a Dutch engineering firm; another advertised travel packages, another had local paintings and crafts. The historical display included old paintings and photos of St. Petersburg, a scale model of the city, and a life-size Peter the Great mannequin you could get your picture taken with.

This building, I recalled, had been one of the most important places in the city during the October Revolution and the events surrounding it. As a marker on an outside wall proclaimed, in faded letters nobody had bothered to regild, "Here, in the former Manege, at a meeting on 15 April 1917 of the soldiers of the Armored Car division, and at a gathering on 1 January 1918 of a regiment of Red Army troops about to set out for the Western Front, V. I. LENIN made a speech." It was in the Manege that the journalist John Reed observed the armored-car troops, the most powerful military force in the city, whose shift to one side or the other could decide the revolution. "The door of the great Mikhailovsky Riding-School yawned blackly," Reed wrote. "Inside only a single arc lamp burned dimly, high up near the roof of the enormous hall. . . . Around dimly squatted the monstrous shapes of the armoured cars. One stood alone in the centre of the place under the light, and round it were gathered some two thousand dun-colored soldiers, almost lost in the immensity of that imperial building." From the top of the armored car, N. V. Krylenko, a Bolshevik leader, made a passionate appeal that swung the armored-car soldiers to the Bolshevik side—as Reed describes it, a decisive moment in the October Revolution.

Bessie Beatty, a correspondent for a San Francisco newspaper, saw Lenin speak at the gathering of troops on January 1, 1918. She wrote, "At last he [Lenin] came, and a mighty cheer went up. His brown eyes were shining and the chill winter evening had painted two bright spots upon his cheeks. He wore a black fur cap and a black overcoat, and there was a brisk, pleasant cheeriness about him that the rogues'-gallery pictures of him do not suggest." She added that afterward, as Lenin drove away in a closed limousine, someone fired a shot through its window and just missed him. Like Reed, Bessie Beatty believed in the Revolution. Anyone who couldn't see the hope in it, she said, was "a blind man looking at a sunrise."

Where Lenin spoke, where the armored cars once dimly squatted, sales reps for a bottled-water company now lounged. I went back through the exhibition's historical display a second time to see if I could find any mention of



"Just a pear? Is that all you're having for dinner?"

• •

1917. All I found was a single caption beneath a photo of what appeared to be Bolshevik soldiers: "The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution altered Russia out of recognition, and changed the course of world history. Mementos of those turbulent years are on display at the National Museum of the Political History of Russia."

Modern Russia is like a recently divorced person around whom one must be careful not to mention the colorful but awful former spouse. And yet it seems strange that the Russian socialist movement, which so many serious and decent and fervent people spent so many decades talking about over so many cigarettes and cups of tea, and which so many fought for and went to prison for and believed in so deeply, should have disappeared under the rubble of Bolshevism forever; and that all that hope and thought and striving come to zero in the end.

During the last days of the anniversary celebration, President Putin arrived, along with dignitaries from many lands. Most citizens of St. Petersburg did not see them in person, of course; they saw only the enormous security zones that had been cleared out around them. The airport, never bustling on its busiest day, was shut down to commercial traffic so that their planes could land unhindered. Military patrol boats kept all nonmilitary boats off the Neva. White-gloved policemen stood every fifty feet along major avenues, which yawned emptily, awaiting motorcades. If you stepped off the curb, they yelled at you. Lyuda and I walked downtown one morning to see if Bush or somebody would drive by. We got stuck with a bunch of people at a crosswalk waiting to cross. No vehicles were visible anywhere in either direction, and still the policeman held the pedestrians on each side looking at each other across the vacant pavement. Five minutes passed, then ten, with no traffic but a snack wrapper blowing by. When he finally released us with a nod, everybody scurried across like kids let out of school.

Farther on, as we walked near The Hermitage, a convoy of limousines and black S.U.V.s suddenly wheeled around the corner, going up the street at high speed. At one of the vehicles' windows, I thought I saw the small blond head of Putin. The convoy disappeared. A few minutes later, it came speeding by again, now on an adjacent street and going in nearly the opposite direction. "Putin again," Lyuda said. "He is just driving around town."

Many of the V.I.P. events took place at expensively restored palaces outside the city. The image of splendid, storybook, old-timey St. Petersburg back when everybody wore white wigs apparently went well with an upbeat impression the Putin government was trying to convey. The member states of the European Union held a summit at one palace. To welcome them, Pavarotti sang. Before a luncheon at another palace, Jacques Chirac became so absorbed in admiring the restoration that he missed part of Putin's address. From the point of view of news, most of it was soft. The E.U. nations expressed continued reluctance to relax visa rules for Russians, out of their fear of influxes of Russian mafiosi. President and Mrs. Bush seemed to have a good time, and Bush let it be known that he wasn't mad at Putin about Iraq.

Ads in the metro and elsewhere said that there would be a big show on the Neva on the evening of May 31st, the penultimate day of the celebration. None of the ads mentioned that, in order to attend, you had to be invited, and most people weren't. With the rest of the broad masses, I showed up in the late afternoon hoping to get a good viewing spot along the river. Before I neared that point, however, a squad of about seven different kinds of police, soldiers, and security forces blocked the street. With the optimism of the uninformed, the deflected throng around me simply tried the next street, only to meet another wall of flak jackets and weaponry. And so it was all along the boundary that the military had set up. No one was getting through, they said, as they admitted a few guests carrying special blue invitations and turned thousands of baffled St. Petersburgers away.

Up the street from a heavily guarded checkpoint, I saw a young man in uniform who appeared more approachable. I asked him if he knew of any place where people were being let through. He said I could get through anywhere, and offered to take me himself. Surprised by my luck, I thanked him, using the formal "you." He said I could use the familiar "you," and offered me a Salem cigarette from a flip-top box.

He asked if I was Dutch, and, when I said I was American, asked where I lived in America. He had heard of New Jersey. He was in his early twenties and had that smile of complete sweetness and guilelessness some Russians have. He said his name was Anatoly; he'd been in the Army for two and a half years and had served all over the country, from Kazakhstan to the Russian Far East. With a "don't worry it's all taken care of" lowering of the eyelids he led me to the first line of soldiers, and we actually

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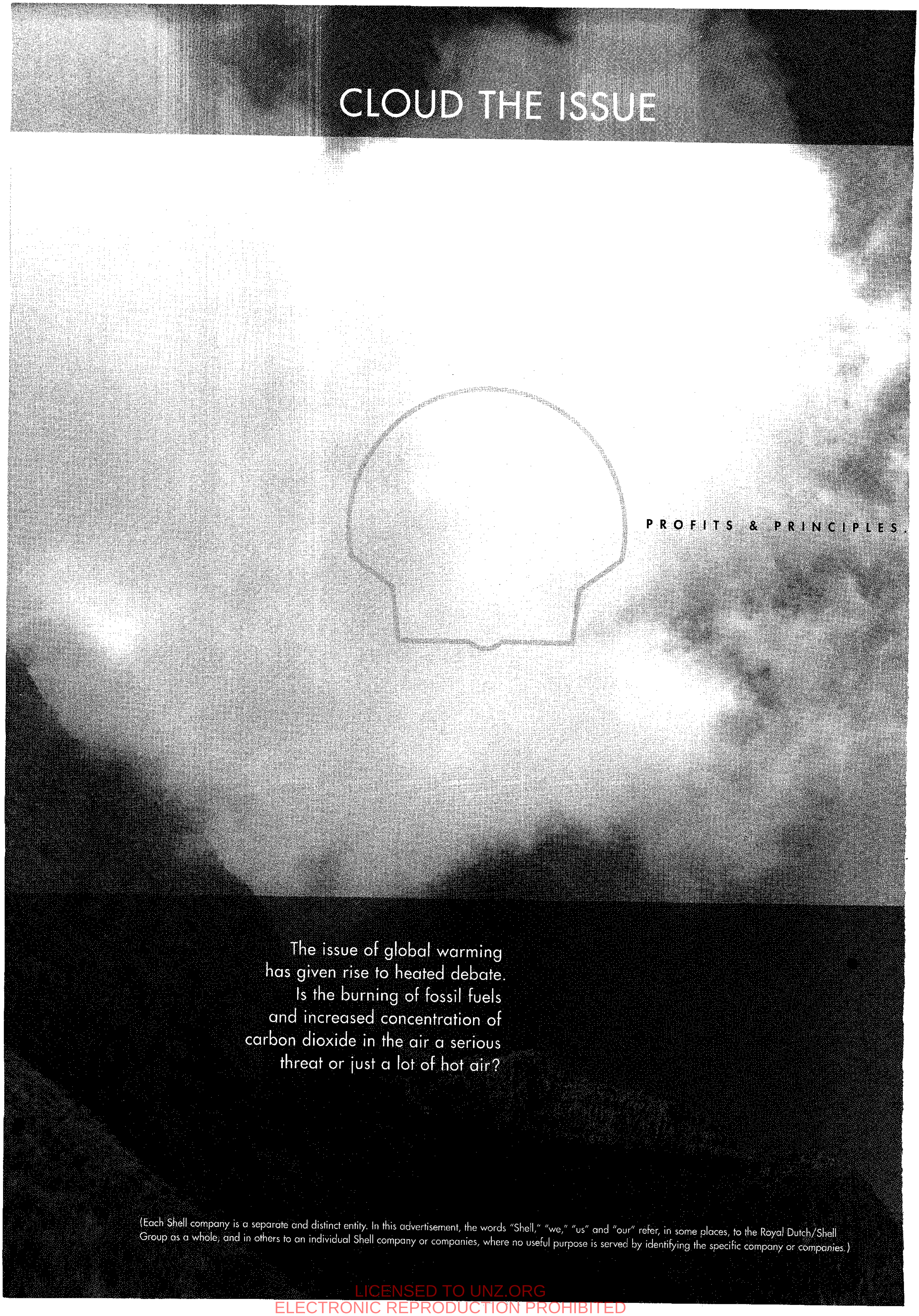

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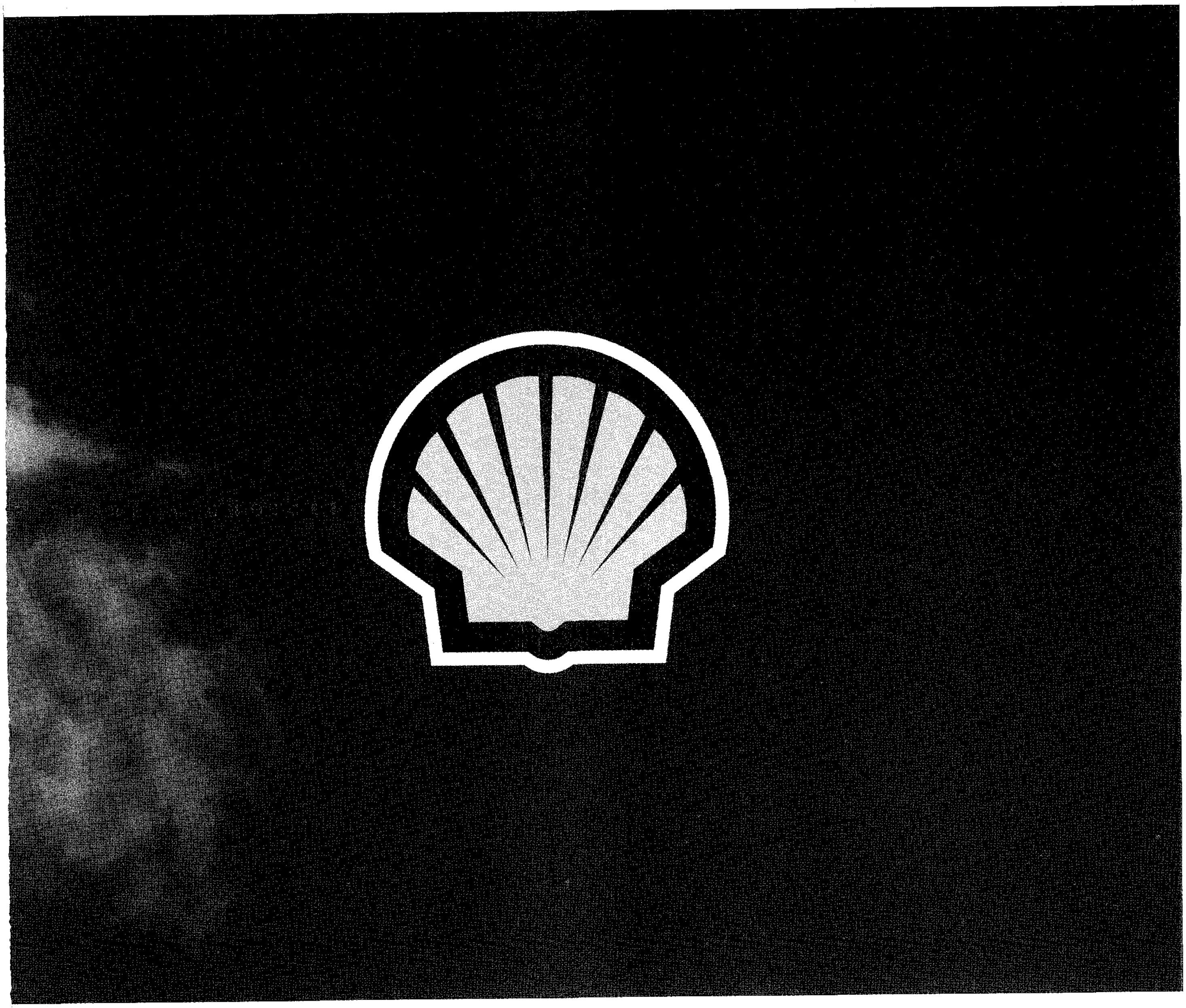

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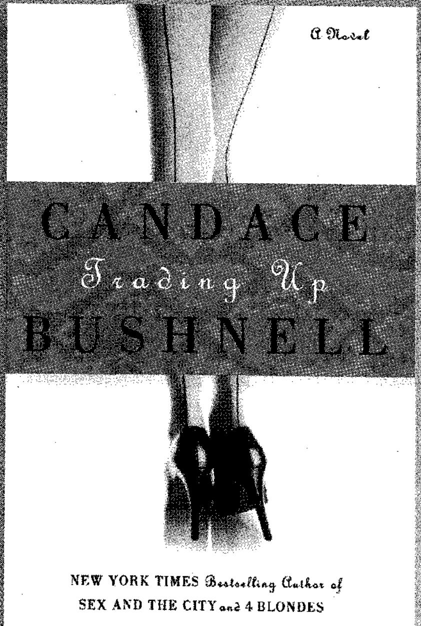
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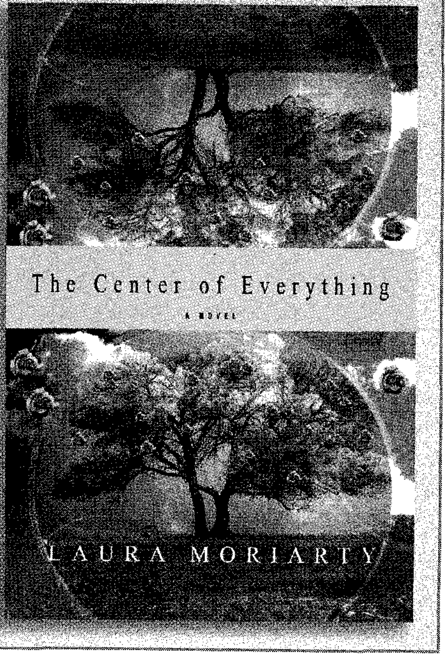
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made it by them. A step or two beyond, however, he ran into an older officer with a broader chest and bigger hat, who turned us back with a few curt words. "Impossible to pass," Anatoly said to me, smiling and lighting another Salem as we stood again on the civilian side. Then he started asking me if I had friends in St. Petersburg, and where I was staying, and what I planned to do now. Fearing entanglements, I answered vaguely, shook his hand, and said goodbye. He took no offense, though he had only been trying to be friendly.

Some people gave up and went home, some found ad-hoc places to sit and drink. Some just stayed next to the security forces, like water next to sandbags. The sudden unannounced appearance of armed soldiers and cops and armored vehicles painted desert camouflage at a civic celebration caused no real surprise. From the Liteiny Prospekt bridge, about a mile up the Neva, it was possible to see the masts of some of the parading ships and the spray from some of the floating fountains in front of the reviewing stand. I stood on the bridge with a bunch of rebuffed citizens who were making the best of things. On a big TV screen atop a nearby building, Putin was shown, live, delivering a speech with the river in the background. An audience of V.I.P.s (Bush was not in attendance) sat expansively in their wide chairs, their faces expressing the obligatoriness of the event. When Putin paused for applause, no roar rose from the vast crowd, because there wasn't any.

Putin is from St. Petersburg, as most Russians know. That, plus the fact that many of his closest aides are from there, too, helps explain why the Russian government spent so much on restoring the city and made a big deal of the tricentennial. Putin's connection to the city is deep. His father fought in some of the fiercest battles with the Nazis during the siege of Leningrad. At one point during the siege, his mother fainted from hunger, and came to among corpses that had been left for removal to the cemetery. Putin was born in 1952. By then, the family had moved to an apartment on Baskov Lane.

Baskov Lane is a seldom travelled street in a residential neighborhood in the city's central district. No plaque identifies the building where Putin grew up. The city's recent restoration efforts seem to have left the neighborhood undisturbed. Some of the buildings have prominent markers dating them to the Stalin era; one weathered cement front, carved to look like stone, bears the year 1947, noted as the thirtieth anniversary of the Great October Revolution. Apartment buildings of five and six stories encircle interior courtyards, which lack swing sets or benches or any other amenities. And yet the courtyards have a coziness, with the drab walls looming protectively around.

I happened by Baskov Lane a few days after the ceremonies were done. Boys were kicking a soccer ball in the middle of the street. At the curb, a man leaned under the hood of a car, shouting instructions to a girl in the front seat; every time he shouted, jets from the windshield washers shot over the car's roof. I went into the courtyard of an apartment building and stood for a while in the afternoon's domestic quiet. Then I crossed to the nearest entryway, opened the door, and walked in. Like virtually all entryways in Russian apartment buildings, it was steeped in medieval gloom, probably owing to theft or breakage of entryway light bulbs. Faded graffiti and scratches defaced its crumbling two-tone walls. The steps to the first landing were as worn and chipped and old as stone steps in a cave, and were dotted with flattened cigarette butts. And I breathed its smell—not a bad smell, or a good one, but a living Russian smell—of cigarette smoke, damp concrete, some kind of fragrant crushed-underfoot grass or berry, cabbage soup, cat pee, sour cream, and sunflower-seed cooking oil. In "The Overcoat," written in 1842, Nikolai Gogol showed his hero, Akaky Akakievich, going up the staircase in the apartment building of his tailor: "These stairs, to describe them accurately, were running with water and slops, and were saturated with that strong smell of spirit which makes the eyes smart and is a perpetual feature of all backstairs in Petersburg." The Russian apartment-entryway smell can be found in buildings from one end of the country to another, across eleven time zones to the shores of the Bering Sea. No matter what revolution or restructuring or restoration the country endures in its next century and beyond, this ancient smell will be the same. ♦

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A NEUROLOGIST'S NOTEBOOK

THE MIND'S EYE

What the blind see.

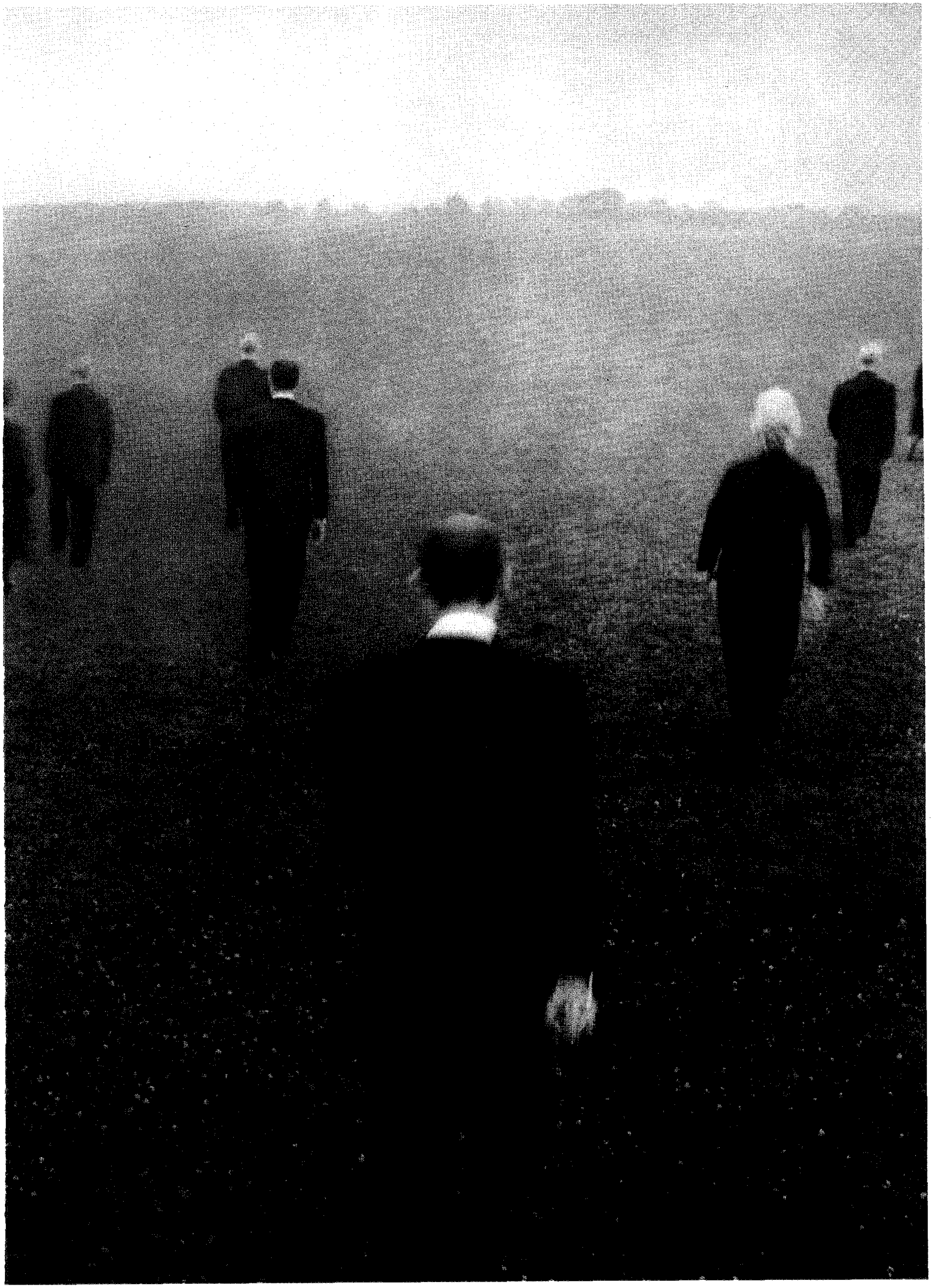
BY OLIVER SACKS

In his last letter, Goethe wrote, "The Ancients said that the animals are taught through their organs; let me add to this, so are men, but they have the advantage of teaching their organs in return." He wrote this in 1832, a time when phrenology was at its height, and the brain was seen as a mosaic of "little organs" subserving everything from language to drawing ability to shyness. Each individual, it was believed, was given a fixed measure of this faculty or that, according to the luck of his birth. Though we no longer pay attention, as the phrenologists did, to the "bumps" on the head (each of which, supposedly, indicated a brain-mind organ beneath), neurology and neuroscience have stayed close to the idea of brain fixity and localization—the notion, in particular, that the highest part of the brain, the cerebral cortex, is effectively programmed from birth: this part to vision and visual processing, that part to hearing, that to touch, and so on.

This would seem to allow individuals little power of choice, of self-determination, let alone of adaptation, in the event of a neurological or perceptual mishap.

But to what extent are we—our experiences, our reactions—shaped, predetermined, by our brains, and to what extent do we shape our own brains? Does the mind run the brain or the brain the mind—or, rather, to what extent does one run the other? To what extent are we the authors, the creators, of our own experiences? The effects of a profound perceptual deprivation such as blindness can cast an unexpected light on this. To become blind, especially later in life, presents one with a huge, potentially overwhelming challenge: to find a new way of living, of ordering one's world, when the old way has been destroyed.

A dozen years ago, I was sent an extraordinary book called "Touching the Rock: An Experience of Blindness." The author, John Hull, was a professor of religious education who had grown up in Australia and then moved to England. Hull had developed cataracts at the age of thirteen, and became completely blind in his left eye four years later. Vision in his right eye remained reasonable until he was thirty-five or so, and then started to deteriorate. There followed a decade of steadily failing vision, in which Hull needed stronger and stronger magnifying glasses, and had to write with



ROBERT & SHANA PARKEHARRISON, "SPRAWL" (2002)/BONNI BENRUBI GALLERY thicker and thicker pens, until, in 1983, at the age of forty-eight, he became completely blind.

"Touching the Rock" is the journal he dictated in the three years that followed. It is full of piercing insights relating to Hull's life as a blind person, but most striking for me is Hull's description of how, in the years after his loss of sight, he experienced a gradual attenuation of visual imagery and memory, and finally a virtual extinction of them (except in dreams)—a state that he calls "deep blindness."

By this, Hull meant not only the loss of visual images and memories but a loss of the very idea of seeing, so that concepts like "here," "there," and "facing" seemed to lose meaning for him, and even the sense of objects having "appearances," visible characteristics, vanished. At this point, for example, he could no longer imagine how the numeral 3 looked, unless he traced it in the air with his hand. He could construct a "motor" image of a 3, but not a visual one.

Hull, though at first greatly distressed about the fading of visual memories and images—the fact that he could no longer conjure up the faces of his wife or children, or of familiar and loved landscapes and places—then came to accept it with remarkable equanimity; indeed, to regard it as a natural response to a nonvisual world. He seemed to regard this loss of visual imagery as a prerequisite for the full development, the heightening, of his other senses.

Two years after becoming completely blind, Hull had apparently become so nonvisual as to resemble someone who had been blind from birth. Hull's loss of visuality also reminded me of the sort of "cortical blindness" that can happen if the primary visual cortex is damaged, through a stroke or traumatic brain damage—although in Hull's case there was no direct damage to the visual cortex but, rather, a cutting off from any visual stimulation or input.

In a profoundly religious way, and in language sometimes reminiscent of that of St. John of the Cross, Hull enters into this state, surrenders himself, with a sort of acquiescence and joy. And such "deep" blindness he conceives as "an authentic and autonomous world, a place of its own. . . . Being a whole-body seer is to be in one of the concentrated human conditions."

Being a "whole-body seer," for Hull, means shifting his attention, his center of gravity, to the other senses, and he writes again and again of how these have assumed a new richness and power. Thus he speaks of how the sound of rain, never before accorded much attention, can now delineate a whole landscape for him, for its sound on the garden path is different from its sound as it drums on the lawn, or on the bushes in his garden, or on the fence dividing it from the road. "Rain," he writes, "has a way of bringing out the contours of everything; it throws a coloured blanket over previously invisible things; instead of an intermittent and thus fragmented world, the steadily falling rain creates continuity of acoustic experience . . . presents the fullness of an entire situation all at once . . . gives a sense of perspective and of the actual relationships of one part of the world to another."

With his new intensity of auditory experience (or attention), along with the sharpening of his other senses, Hull comes to feel a sense of intimacy with nature, an intensity of being-in-the-world, beyond anything he knew when he was sighted. Blindness now becomes for him "a dark, paradoxical gift." This is not just "compensation," he emphasizes, but a whole new order, a new mode of human being. With this he extricates himself from visual nostalgia, from the strain, or falsity, of trying to pass as "normal," and finds a new focus, a new freedom. His teaching at the university expands, becomes more fluent, his writing becomes stronger and deeper; he becomes intellectually and spiritually bolder, more confident. He feels he is on solid ground at last.

What Hull described seemed to me an astounding example of how an individual deprived of one form of perception could totally reshape himself to a new center, a new identity.

It is said that those who see normally as infants but then become blind within the first two years of life retain no memories of seeing, have no visual imagery and no visual elements in their dreams (and, in this way, are comparable to those born blind). It is similar with those who lose hearing before the age of two: they have no sense of having "lost" the world of sound, nor any sense of "silence," as hearing people sometimes imagine. For those who lose sight so early, the very concepts of "sight" or "blindness" soon cease to have meaning, and there is no sense of losing the world of vision, only of living fully in a world constructed by the other senses.

But it seemed extraordinary to me that such an annihilation of visual memory as Hull describes could happen equally to an adult, with decades, an entire lifetime, of rich and richly categorized visual experience to call upon. And

FOUR YEARS AT JUILLIARD FOR THIS ?

yet I could not doubt the authenticity of Hull's account, which he relates with the most scrupulous care and lucidity.

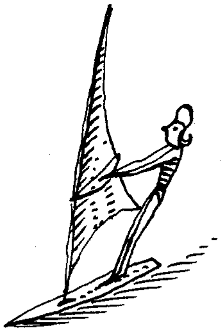
Important studies of adaptation in the brain were begun in the nineteen-seventies by, among others, Helen Neville, a cognitive neuroscientist now working in Oregon. She showed that in prelingually deaf people (that is, those who had been born deaf or become deaf before the age of two or so) the auditory parts of the brain had not degenerated or atrophied. These had remained active and functional, but with an activity and a function that were new: they had been transformed, "reallocated," in Neville's term, for processing visual language. Comparable studies in those born blind, or early blinded, show that the visual areas of the cortex, similarly, may be reallocated in function, and used to process sound and touch.

With the reallocation of the visual cortex to touch and other senses, these can take on a hyperacuity that perhaps no sighted person can imagine. Bernard Morin, the blind mathematician who in the nineteen-sixties had shown how a sphere could be turned inside out, felt that his achievement required a special sort of spatial perception and imagination. And a similar sort of spatial giftedness has been central to the work of Geerat Vermeij, a blind biologist who has been able to delineate many new species of mollusk, based on tiny variations in the shapes and contours of their shells.

Faced with such findings and reports, neurologists began to concede that there might be a certain flexibility or plasticity in the brain, at least in the early years of life. But when this critical period was over, it was assumed, the brain became inflexible, and no further changes of a radical type could occur. The experiences that Hull so carefully recounts give the lie to this. It is clear that his perceptions, his brain, did finally change, in a fundamental way. Indeed, Alvaro Pascual-Leone and his colleagues in Boston have recently shown that, even in adult sighted volunteers, as little as five days of being blindfolded produces marked shifts to nonvisual forms of behavior and cognition, and they have demonstrated the physiological changes in the brain that go along with this. And only last month, Italian researchers published a study showing that sighted volunteers kept in the dark for as little as ninety *minutes* may show a striking enhancement of tactile-spatial sensitivity.

The brain, clearly, is capable of changing even in adulthood, and I assumed that Hull's experience was typical of acquired blindness—the response, sooner or later, of everyone who becomes blind, even in adult life.

So when I came to publish an essay on Hull's book, in 1991, I was taken aback to receive a number of letters from blind people, letters that were often somewhat puzzled, and occasionally indignant, in tone. Many of my correspondents, it seemed, could not identify with Hull's experience, and said that they themselves, even decades after losing their sight, had never lost their visual images or memories. One correspondent, who had lost her sight at fifteen, wrote, "Even though I am totally blind . . . I consider myself a very visual person. I still 'see' objects in front of me. As I am typing now I can see my hands on the keyboard. . . . I don't feel comfortable in a new environment until I have a mental picture of its appearance. I need a mental map for my independent moving, too."



Had I been wrong, or at least one-sided, in accepting Hull's experience as a typical response to blindness? Had I been guilty of emphasizing one mode of response too strongly, oblivious to the possibilities of radically different responses?

This feeling came to a head in 1996, when I received a letter from an Australian psychologist named Zoltan Torey. Torey wrote to me not about blindness but about a book he had written on the brain-mind problem and the nature of consciousness. (The book was published by Oxford University Press as "The Crucible of Consciousness," in 1999.) In his letter Torey also spoke of how he had been blinded in an accident at the age of twenty-one, while working at a chemical factory, and how, although "advised to switch from a visual to an auditory mode of adjustment," he had moved in the opposite direction, and resolved to develop instead his "inner eye," his powers of visual imagery, to their greatest possible extent.

In this, it seemed, he had been extremely successful, developing a remarkable power of generating, holding, and manipulating images in his mind, so much so that he had been able to construct an imagined visual world that seemed almost as real and intense to him as the perceptual one he had lost—and, indeed, sometimes more real, more intense, a sort of controlled dream or hallucination. This imagery, moreover, enabled him to do things that might have seemed scarcely possible for a blind man.

"I replaced the entire roof guttering of my multi-gabled home single-handed," he wrote, "and solely on the strength of the accurate and well-focused manipulation of my now totally pliable and responsive mental space." (Torey later expanded on this episode, mentioning the great alarm of his neighbors at seeing a blind man, alone, on the roof of his house—and, even more terrifying to them, at night, in pitch darkness.)

And it enabled him to think in ways that had not been available to him before, to envisage solutions, models, designs, to project himself to the inside of machines and other systems, and, finally, to grasp by visual thought and simulation (complemented by all the data of neuroscience) the complexities of that ultimate system, the human brain-mind.

When I wrote back to Torey, I suggested that he consider writing another book, a more personal one, exploring how his life had been affected by blindness, and how he had responded to this, in the most improbable and seemingly paradoxical of ways. "Out of Darkness" is the memoir he has now written, and in it Torey describes his early memories with great visual intensity and humor. Scenes are remembered or reconstructed in brief, poetic glimpses of his childhood and youth in Hungary before the Second World War: the sky-blue buses of Budapest, the egg-yellow trams, the lighting of gas lamps, the funicular on the Buda side. He describes a carefree and privileged youth, roaming with his father in the wooded mountains above the Danube, playing games and pranks at school, growing up in a highly intellectual environment of writers, actors, professionals of every sort. Torey's father was the head of a large motion-picture studio and would often give his son scripts to read. “This,” Torey writes, “gave me the opportunity to visualize stories, plots and characters, to work my imagination—a skill that was to become a lifeline and source of strength in the years ahead.”

All of this came to a brutal end with the Nazi occupation, the siege of Buda, and then the Soviet occupation. Torey, now an adolescent, found himself passionately drawn to the big questions—the mystery of the universe, of life, and above all the mystery of consciousness, of the mind. In 1948, nineteen years old, and feeling that he needed to immerse himself in biology, engineering, neuroscience, and psychology, but knowing that there was no chance of study, of an intellectual life, in Soviet Hungary, Torey made his escape and eventually found his way to Australia, where, penniless and without connections, he did various manual jobs. In June of 1951, loosening the plug in a vat of acid at the chemical factory where he worked, he had the accident that bisected his life.

“The last thing I saw with complete clarity was a glint of light in the flood of acid that was to engulf my face and change my life. It was a nano-second of sparkle, framed by the black circle of the drumface, less than a foot away. This was the final scene, the slender thread that ties me to my visual past.”

When it became clear that his corneas had been hopelessly damaged and that he would have to live his life as a blind man, he was advised to rebuild his representation of the world on the basis of hearing and touch and to “forget about sight and visualizing altogether.” But this was something that Torey could not or would not do. He had emphasized, in his first letter to me, the importance of a most critical choice at this juncture: “I immediately resolved to find out how far a partially sense-deprived brain could go to rebuild a life.” Put this way, it sounds abstract, like an experiment. But in his book one senses the tremendous feelings underlying his resolution—the horror of darkness, “the empty darkness,” as Torey often calls it, “the grey fog that was engulfing me,” and the passionate desire to hold on to light and sight, to maintain, if only in memory and imagination, a vivid and living visual world. The very title of his book says all this, and the note of defiance is sounded from the start.

A CHINESE BOWL

Plucked from a junk shop
chipped celadon
shadow of a swallow’s wing
or cast by venetian blinds

on tinted legal pads
one summer Saturday
in 1957.
Absorbed at his big desk

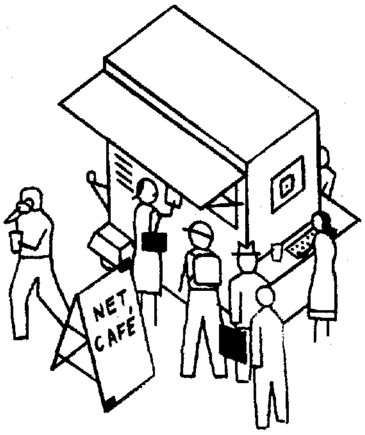
my father works on briefs.
The little Royal makes
its satisfying *chocks*
stamping an inky nimbus

around each thick black letter
with cutout moons for “O”s.
Curled up on the floor,
I’m writing, too: “Bean Soup

and Rice,” a play about
a poor girl in Kyoto
and the treasure-finding rabbit
who saves her home. Fluorescent

light spills cleanly down
on the Danish-modern couch
and metal cabinet
which hides no folder labelled

Hull, who did not use his potential for imagery in a deliberate way, lost it in two or three years, and became unable to remember which way round a 3 went; Torey, on the other hand, soon became able to multiply four-figure numbers by each other, as on a blackboard, visualizing the whole operation in his mind, “painting” the suboperations in different colors.



Well aware that the imagination (or the brain), unrestrained by the usual perceptual input, may run away with itself in a wildly associative or self-serving way—as may happen in deliria, hallucinations, or dreams—Torey maintained a cautious and “scientific” attitude to his own visual imagery, taking pains to check the accuracy of his images by every means available. “I learned,” he writes, “to hold the image in a tentative way, conferring credibility and status on it only when some information would tip the balance in its favor.” Indeed, he soon gained enough confidence in the reliability of his visual imagery to stake his life upon it, as when he undertook roof repairs by himself. And this confidence extended to other, purely mental projects. He became able “to imagine, to visualize, for example, the

"blacklist" or "Party business"
or "drink" or "mother's death."
I think, This is happiness,
right here, right now, these

walls striped green and gray,
shadow and sun, dust motes
stirring the still air,
and a feeling gathers, heavy

as rain about to fall,
part love, part concentration,
part inner solitude.
Where is that room, those gray-

green thin-lined
scribbled papers
littering the floor?
How did

I move so far away,
just living day by day,
that now all rooms seem strange,
the years all error?
                                        Bowl,

what could
I drink from you,
clear green tea
or iron-bitter water

that would renew
my fallen life?

—*Katha Pollitt*

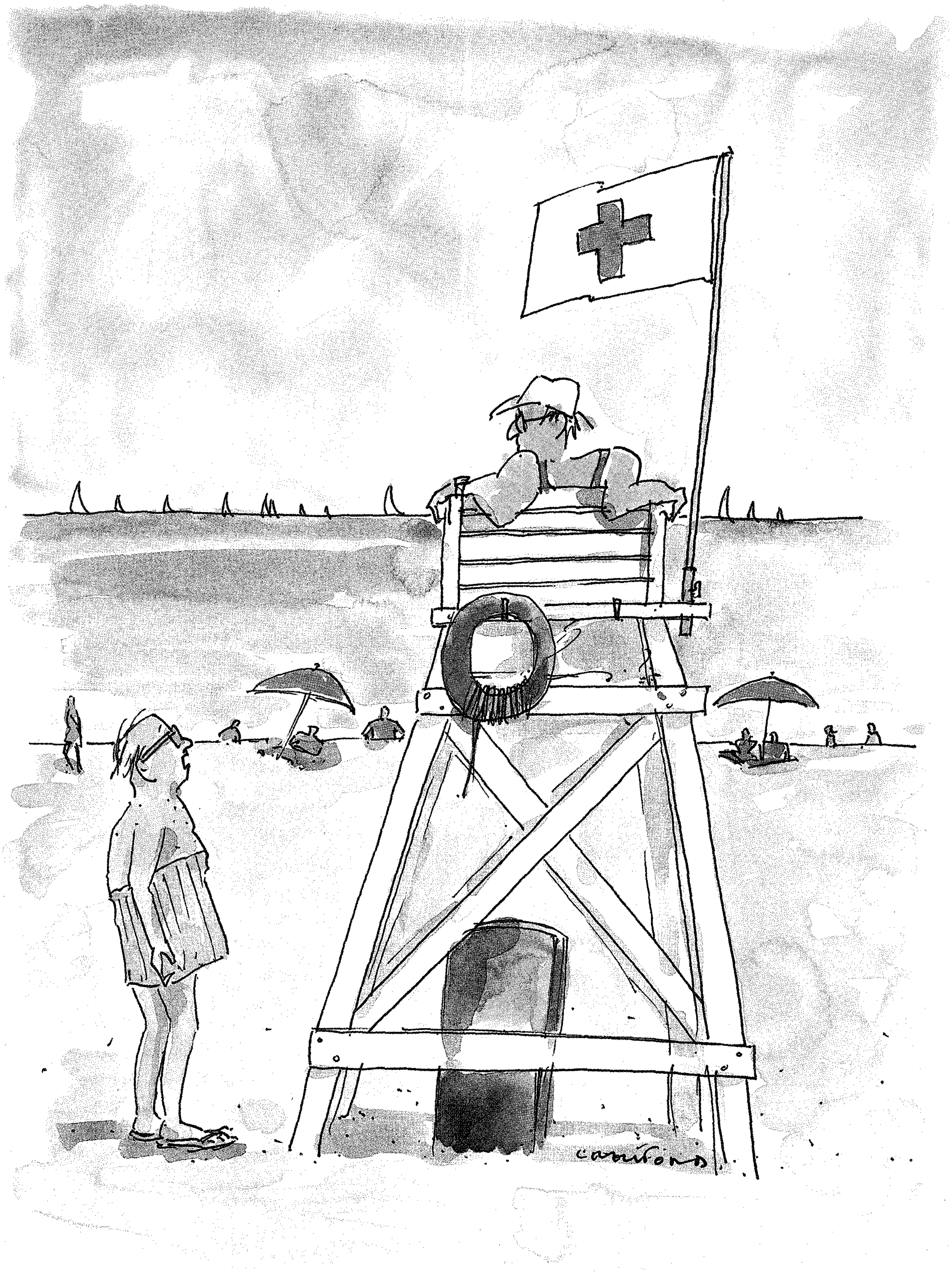
inside of a differential gearbox in action as if from inside its casing. I was able to watch the cogs bite, lock and revolve, distributing the spin as required. I began to play around with this internal view in connection with mechanical and technical problems, visualizing how subcomponents relate in the atom, or in the living cell." This power of imagery was crucial, Torey thought, in enabling him to arrive at a solution of the brain-mind problem by visualizing the brain "as a perpetual juggling act of interacting routines."

In a famous study of creativity, the French mathematician Jacques Hadamard asked many scientists and mathematicians, including Einstein, about their thought processes. Einstein replied, "The physical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are . . . more or less clear images which can be 'voluntarily' reproduced and combined. [Some are] of visual and some of muscular type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage." Torey cites this, and adds, "Nor was Einstein unique in this respect. Hadamard found that almost all scientists work this way, and this was also the way my project evolved."

Soon after receiving Torey's manuscript, I received the proofs of yet another memoir by a blind person: Sabriye Tenberken's "My Path Leads to Tibet." While Hull and Torey are thinkers, preoccupied in their different ways by inwardness, states of brain and mind, Tenberken is a doer; she has travelled, often alone, all over Tibet, where for centuries blind people have been treated as less than human and denied education, work, respect, or a role in the community. Virtually single-handed, Tenberken has transformed their situation over the past half-dozen years, devising a form of Tibetan Braille, establishing schools for the blind, and integrating the graduates of these schools into their communities.

Tenberken herself had impaired vision almost from birth but was able to make out faces and landscapes until she was twelve. As a child in Germany, she had a particular predilection for colors, and loved painting, and when she was no longer able to decipher shapes and forms she could still use colors to identify objects. Tenberken has, indeed, an intense synesthesia. "As far back as I can remember," she writes, "numbers and words have instantly triggered colors in me. . . . The number 4, for example, [is] gold. Five is light green. Nine is vermillion. . . . Days of the week as well as months have their colors, too. I have them arranged in geometrical formations, in circular sectors, a little like a pie. When I need to recall on which day a particular event happened, the first thing that pops up on my inner screen is the day's color, then its position in the pie." Her synesthesia has persisted and been intensified, it seems, by her blindness.

Though she has been totally blind for twenty years now, Tenberken continues to use all her other senses, along with verbal descriptions, visual memories, and a strong pictorial and synesthetic sensibility, to construct "pictures" of landscapes and rooms, of environments and scenes—pictures so lively and detailed as to astonish her listeners. These images may sometimes be wildly or comically different from reality, as she relates in one incident when she and a companion drove to Nam Co, the great salt lake in Tibet. Turning eagerly toward the lake, Tenberken saw, in her mind's eye, "a beach of crystallized salt shimmering like snow under an evening sun, at the edge of a vast body of turquoise water. . . . And down below, on the deep green mountain flanks, a few nomads were watching their yaks grazing." But it then turns out that she has been facing in the wrong direction, not "looking" at the lake at all, and that she has been "staring" at rocks and a gray landscape. These disparities don't faze her in the least—she is happy to have so vivid a visual imagination. Hers is essentially an artistic imag-



"Help!"

ination, which can be impressionistic, romantic, not veridical at all, where Torey's imagination is that of an engineer, and has to be factual, accurate down to the last detail.

I had now read three memoirs, strikingly different in their depictions of the visual experience of blinded people: Hull with his acquiescent descent into imageless "deep blindness," Torey with his "compulsive visualization" and meticulous construction of an internal visual world, and Tenberken with her impulsive, almost novelistic, visual freedom, along with her remarkable and specific gift of synesthesia. Was there any such thing, I now wondered, as a "typical" blind experience?

I recently met two other people blinded in adult life who shared their experiences with me.

Dennis Shulman, a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst who lectures on Biblical topics, is an affable, stocky, bearded man in his fifties who gradually lost his sight in his teens, becoming completely blind by the time he entered college. He immediately confirmed that his experience was unlike Hull's: "I still live in a visual world after thirty-five years of blindness. I have very vivid visual memories and images. My wife, whom I have never seen—I think of her visually. My kids, too. I see myself visually—but it is as I last saw myself, when I was thirteen, though I try hard to update the image. I often give public lectures, and my notes are in Braille; but when I go over them in my mind, I see the Braille notes visually—they are visual images, not tactile."

Arlene Gordon, a charming woman in her seventies, a former social worker, said that things were very similar for her: "If I move my arms back and forth in front of my eyes, I see them, even though I have been blind for more than thirty years." It seemed that moving her arms was immediately translated for her into a visual image. Listening to talking books, she added, made her eyes tire if she listened too long; she seemed to herself to be reading at such times, the sound of the spoken words being transformed to lines of print on a vividly visualized book in front of her. This involved a sort of cognitive exertion (similar perhaps to translating one language into another), and sooner or later this would give her an eye ache.

I was reminded of Amy, a colleague who had been deafened by scarlet fever at the age of nine but was so adept a lip-reader that I often forgot she was deaf. Once, when I absent-mindedly turned away from her as I was speaking, she said sharply, "I can no longer hear you."

"You mean you can no longer see me," I said.

"*You* may call it seeing," she answered, "but I experience it as hearing."

Amy, though totally deaf, still constructed the sound of speech in her mind. Both Dennis and Arlene, similarly, spoke not only of a heightening of visual imagery and imagination since losing their eyesight but also of what seemed to be a much readier transference of information from verbal description—or from their own sense of touch, movement, hearing, or smell—into a visual form. On the whole, their experiences seemed quite similar to Torey's, even though they had not systematically exercised their powers of visual imagery in the way that he had, or consciously tried to make an entire virtual world of sight.

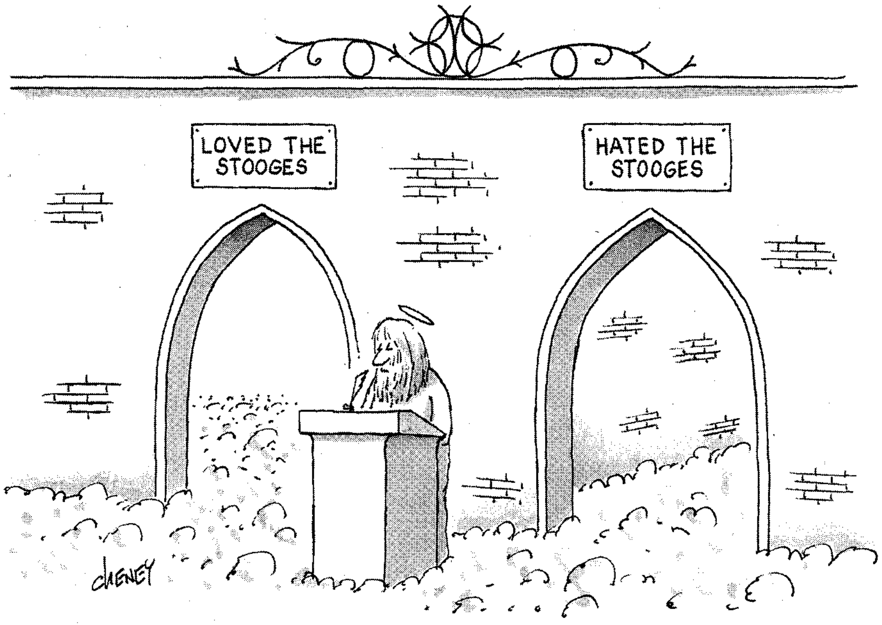
There is increasing evidence from neuroscience for the extraordinarily rich interconnectedness and interactions of the sensory areas of the brain, and the difficulty, therefore, of saying that anything is purely visual or purely auditory, or purely anything. This is evident in the very titles of some recent papers—Pascual-Leone and his colleagues at Harvard now write of "The Metamodal Organization of the Brain," and Shinsuke Shimojo and his group at Caltech, who are also exploring intersensory perceptual phenomena, recently published a paper called "What You See Is What You Hear," and stress that sensory modalities can never be considered in isolation. The world of the blind, of the blinded, it seems, can be especially rich in such in-between states—the intersensory, the metamodal—states for which we have no common language.

Arlene, like Dennis, still identifies herself in many ways as a visual person. "I have a very strong sense of color," she said. "I pick out my own clothes. I think, Oh, that will go with this or that, once I have been told the colors." Indeed, she was dressed very smartly, and took obvious pride in her appearance.

"I love travelling," she continued. "I 'saw' Venice when I was there." She explained how her travelling companions would describe places, and she would then construct a visual image from these details, her reading, and her own visual memories. "Sighted people enjoy travelling with me," she said. "I ask them questions, then they look, and see things they wouldn't otherwise. Too often people with sight don't see anything! It's a reciprocal process—we enrich each other's worlds."

If we are sighted, we build our own images, using our eyes, our visual information, so instantly and seamlessly that it seems to us we are experiencing "reality" itself. One may need to see people who are color-blind, or motion-blind, who have lost certain visual capacities from cerebral injury, to realize the enormous act of analysis and synthesis, the dozens of subsystems involved in the subjectively simple act of seeing. But can a visual image be built using *nonvisual* information—information conveyed by the other senses, by memory, or by verbal description?

There have, of course, been many blind poets and writers, from Homer on. Most of these were born with normal vision and lost their sight in boyhood or adulthood (like Milton). I loved reading Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico" and "Conquest of Peru" as a boy, and feel that I first saw these lands through his intensely visual, almost hallucinogenic descriptions, and I was amazed to discover, years later, that Prescott not only had never visited Mexico or Peru but had been virtually blind since the age of eighteen. Did he, like Torey, compensate for his blindness by developing such powers of visual imagery that he could experience a "virtual reality" of sight? Or were his brilliant visual descriptions in a sense simulated, made possible by the evocative and pictorial powers of language? To what extent can language, a picturing in words, provide a substitute for actual seeing, and for the visual, pictorial imagination? Blind children, it has often been noted, tend to be precocious verbally, and may develop such fluency in the verbal description of faces and places as to leave others (and perhaps themselves) uncertain as to whether they are actually blind. Helen



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Keller's writing, to give a famous example, startles one with its brilliantly visual quality.

When I asked Dennis and Arlene whether they had read John Hull's book, Arlene said, "I was stunned when I read it. His experiences are so unlike mine." Perhaps, she added, Hull had "renounced" his inner vision. Dennis agreed, but said, "We are only two individuals. You are going to have to talk to dozens of people. . . . But in the meanwhile you should read Jacques Lusseyran's memoir."

Lusseyran was a French Resistance fighter whose memoir, "And There Was Light," deals mostly with his experiences fighting the Nazis and later in Buchenwald but includes many beautiful descriptions of his early adaptations to blindness. He was blinded in an accident when he was not quite eight years old, an age that he came to feel was "ideal" for such an eventuality, for, while he already had a rich visual experience to call on, "the habits of a boy of eight are not yet formed, either in body or in mind. His body is infinitely supple." And suppleness, agility, indeed came to characterize his response to blindness.

Many of his initial responses were of loss, both of imagery and of interests:

> A very short time after I went blind I forgot the faces of my mother and father and the faces of most of the people I loved. . . . I stopped caring whether people were dark or fair, with blue eyes or green. I felt that sighted people spent too much time observing these empty things. . . . I no longer even thought about them. People no longer seemed to possess them. Sometimes in my mind men and women appeared without heads or fingers.

This is similar to Hull, who writes, "Increasingly, I am no longer even trying to imagine what people look like. . . . I am finding it more and more difficult to realize that people look like anything, to put any meaning into the idea that they have an appearance."

But then, while relinquishing the actual visual world and many of its values and categories, Lusseyran starts to construct and to use an imaginary visual world more like Torey's.

This started as a sensation of light, a formless, flooding, streaming radiance. Neurological terms are bound to sound reductive in this almost mystical context. Yet one might venture to interpret this as a "release" phenomenon, a spontaneous, almost eruptive arousal of the visual cortex, now deprived of its normal visual input. This is a phenomenon analogous, perhaps, to tinnitus or phantom limbs, though endowed here, by a devout and precociously imaginative little boy, with some element of the supernal. But then, it becomes clear, he does find himself in possession of great powers of visual imagery, and not just a formless luminosity.

The visual cortex, the inner eye, having now been activated, Lusseyran's mind constructed a "screen" upon which whatever he thought or desired was projected and, if need be, manipulated, as on a computer screen. "This screen was not like a blackboard, rectangular or square, which so quickly reaches the edge of its frame," he writes. "My screen was always as big as I needed it to be. Because it was nowhere in space it was everywhere at the same time. . . . Names, figures and objects in general did not appear on my screen without shape, nor just in black and white, but in all the colors of the rainbow. Nothing entered my mind without being bathed in a certain amount of light. . . . In a few months my personal world had turned into a painter's studio."

Great powers of visualization were crucial to the young Lusseyran, even in something as nonvisual (one would think) as learning Braille (he visualizes the Braille dots, as Dennis does), and in his brilliant successes at school. They were no less crucial in the real, outside world. He describes walks with his sighted friend Jean, and how, as they were climbing together up the side of a hill above the Seine Valley, he could say:

> "Just look! This time we're on top. . . . You'll see the whole bend of the river, unless the sun gets in your eyes!" Jean was startled, opened his eyes wide and cried: "You're right." This little scene was often repeated between us, in a thousand forms.

"Every time someone mentioned an event," Lusseyran relates, "the event immediately projected itself in its place on the screen, which was a kind of inner canvas. . . . Comparing my world with his, [Jean] found that his held fewer pictures and not nearly as many colors. This made him almost angry. 'When it comes to that,' he used to say, 'which one of us two is blind?' "

It was his supernormal powers of visualization and visual manipulation—visualizing people's position and movement, the topography of any space, visualizing strategies for defense and attack—coupled with his charismatic personality (and seemingly infallible "nose" or "ear" for detecting falsehood, possible traitors), which later made Lusseyran an icon in the French Resistance.

Dennis, earlier, had spoken of how the heightening of his other senses had increased his sensitivity to moods in other people, and to the most delicate nuances in their speech and self-presentation. He could now recognize many of his patients by smell, he said, and he could often pick up states of tension or anxiety which they might not even be aware of. He felt that he had become far more sensitive to others' emotional states since losing his sight, for he was no longer taken in by visual appearances, which most people learn to camouflage. Voices and smells, by contrast, he felt, could reveal people's depths. He had come to think of most sighted people, he joked, as "visually dependent."

In a subsequent essay, Lusseyran inveighs against the "despotism," the "idol worship" of sight, and sees the "task" of blindness as reminding us of our other, deeper modes of perception and their mutuality. "A blind person has a better sense of feeling, of taste, of touch," he writes, and speaks of these as "the gifts of the blind." And all of these, Lusseyran feels, blend into a single fundamental sense, a deep attentiveness, a slow, almost prehensile attention, a sensuous, intimate being at one with the world which sight, with its quick, flicking, facile quality, continually distracts us from. This is very close to Hull's concept of "deep blindness" as infinitely more than mere compensation but a unique form of perception, a precious and special mode of being.

What happens when the visual cortex is no longer limited, or constrained, by any visual input? The simple answer is that, isolated from the outside, the visual cortex becomes hypersensitive to internal stimuli of all sorts: its own autonomous activity; signals from other brain areas—auditory, tactile, and verbal areas; and the thoughts and emotions of the blinded individual. Sometimes, as sight deteriorates, hallucinations occur—of geometrical patterns, or occasionally of silent, moving figures or scenes that appear and disappear spontaneously, without any relation to the contents of consciousness, or intention, or context.

Something perhaps akin to this is described by Hull as occurring almost convulsively as he was losing the last of his sight. "About a year after I was registered blind," he writes, "I began to have such strong images of what people's faces looked like that they were almost like hallucinations."

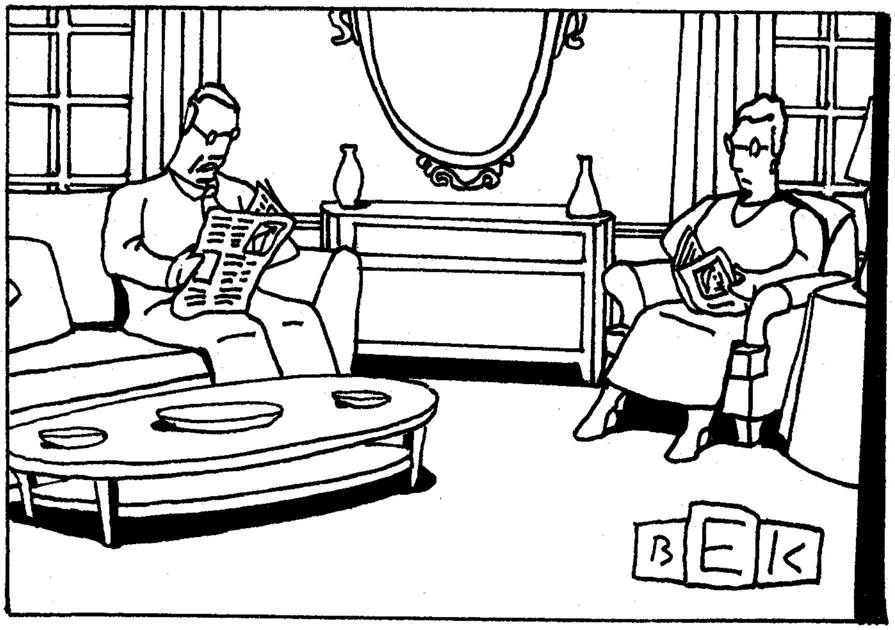
These imperious images were so engrossing as to preëmpt consciousness: "Sometimes," Hull adds, "I would become so absorbed in gazing upon these images, which seemed to come and go without any intention on my part, that I would entirely lose the thread of what was being said to me. I would come back with a shock . . . and I would feel as if I had dropped off to sleep for a few minutes in front of the wireless." Though related to the context of speaking with people, these visions came and went in their own way, without any reference to his intentions, conjured up not by him but by his brain.

The fact that Hull is the only one of the four authors to describe this sort of release phenomenon is perhaps an indication that his visual cortex was starting to escape from his control. One has to wonder whether this signalled its impending demise, at least as an organ of useful visual imagery and memory. Why this should have occurred with him, and how common such a course is, is something one can only speculate on.

Torey, unlike Hull, clearly played a very active role in building up his visual imagery, took control of it the moment the bandages were taken off, and never apparently experienced, or allowed, the sort of involuntary imagery Hull describes. Perhaps this was because he was already very at home with visual imagery, and used to manipulating it in his own way. We know that Torey was very visually inclined before his accident, and skilled from boyhood in creating visual narratives based on the film scripts his father gave him. We have no such information about Hull, for his journal entries start only when he has become blind.

For Lusseyran and Tenberken, there is an added physiological factor: both were attracted to painting, in love with colors, and strongly synesthetic—prone to visualizing numbers, letters, words, music, etc., as shapes and colors—before becoming blind. They already had an overconnectedness, a "cross talk" between the visual cortex and other parts of the brain primarily concerned with language, sound, and music. Given such a neurological situation (synesthesia is congenital, often familial), the persistence of visual imagery and synesthesia, or its heightening, might be almost inevitable in the event of blindness.

Torey required months of intense cognitive discipline dedicated to improving his visual imagery, making it more tenacious, more stable, more malleable, whereas Lusseyran seemed to do this almost effortlessly from the start. Perhaps this was aided by the fact that Lusseyran was not yet eight when blinded (while Torey was twenty-one), and his brain was, ac-



"There's a new art exhibit we could pass judgment on."

cordingly, more plastic, more able to adapt to a new and drastic contingency.

But adaptability does not end with youth. It is clear that Arlene, becoming blind in her forties, was able to adapt in quite radical ways, too, developing not exactly synesthesia but something more flexible and useful: the ability to "see" her hands moving before her, to "see" the words of books read to her, to construct detailed visual images from verbal descriptions. Did she adapt, or did her brain do so? One has a sense that Torey's adaptation was largely shaped by conscious motive, will, and purpose; that Lusseyran's was shaped by overwhelming physiological disposition; and that Arlene's lies somewhere in between. Hull's, meanwhile, remains enigmatic.

There has been much recent work on the neural bases of visual imagery—this can be investigated by brain imaging of various types (PET scanning, functional MRIs, etc.)—and it is now generally accepted that visual imagery activates the cortex in a similar way, and with almost the same intensity, as visual perception itself. And yet studies on the effects of blindness on the human cortex have shown that functional changes may start to occur in a few days, and can become profound as the days stretch into months or years.

Torey, who is well aware of all this research, attributes Hull's loss of visual imagery and memory to the fact that he did not struggle to maintain it, to heighten and systematize and use it, as Torey himself did. (Indeed, Torey expresses horror at what he regards as Hull's passivity, at his letting himself slide into deep blindness.) Perhaps Torey was able to stave off an otherwise inevitable loss of neuronal function in the visual cortex; but perhaps, again, such neural degeneration is quite variable, irrespective of whether or not there is conscious visualization. And, of course, Hull had been losing vision gradually for many years, whereas for Torey blindness was instantaneous and total. It would be of great interest to know the results of brain imaging in the two men, and indeed to look at a large number of people with acquired blindness, to see what correlations, what predictions could be made.

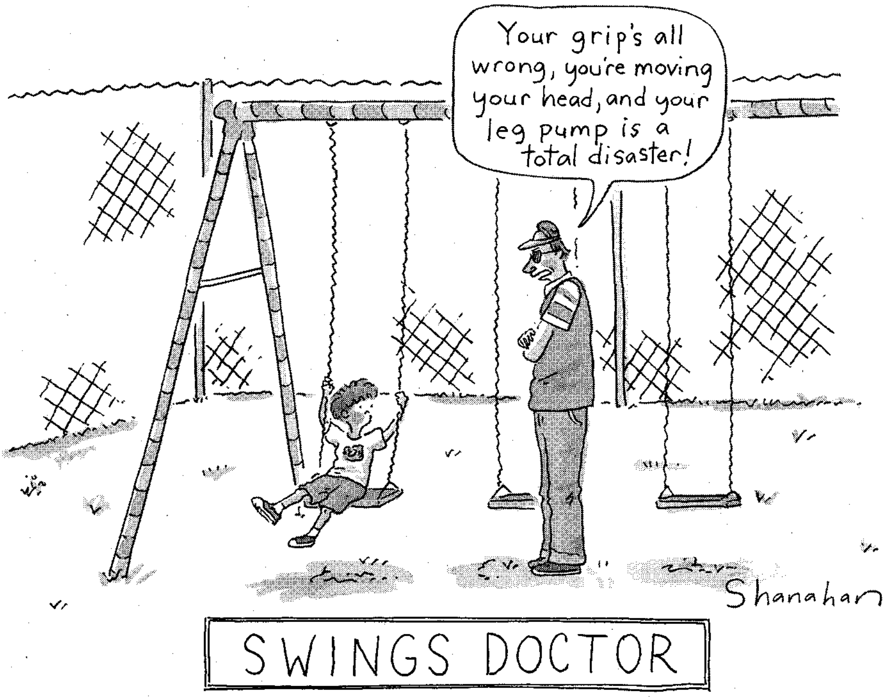
But what if their differences reflect an underlying predisposition independent of blindness? What of visual imagery in the sighted?

I first became conscious that there could be huge variations in visual imagery and visual memory when I was fourteen or so. My mother was a surgeon and comparative anatomist, and I had brought her a lizard's skeleton from school. She gazed at this intently for a minute, turning it round in her hands, then put it down and without looking at it again did a number of drawings of it, rotating it mentally by thirty degrees each time, so that she produced a series, the last drawing exactly the same as the first. I could not imagine how she had done this, and when she said that she could "see" the skeleton in her mind just as clearly and vividly as if she were looking at it, and that she simply rotated the image through a twelfth of a circle each time, I felt bewildered, and very stupid. I could hardly see anything with my mind's eye—at most, faint, evanescent images over which I had no control.

I did have vivid images as I was falling asleep, and in dreams, and once when I had a high fever—but otherwise I saw nothing, or almost nothing, when I tried to visualize, and had great difficulty picturing anybody or anything. Coincidentally or not, I could not draw for toffee.

My mother had hoped I would follow in her footsteps and become a surgeon, but when she realized how lacking in visual powers I was (and how clumsy, lacking in mechanical skill, too) she resigned herself to the idea that I would have to specialize in something else.

I was, however, to get a vivid idea of what mental imagery could be like when, during the nineteen-sixties, I had a period of experimenting with large doses of amphetamines. These can produce striking perceptual changes, including dramatic enhancements of visual imagery and memory (as well as heightenings of the other senses, as I describe in "The Dog Beneath the Skin," a story in "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat"). For a period of two weeks or so, I found that I could do the most accurate anatomical drawings. I had only to look at a picture or an anatomical specimen, and its image would remain both vivid and stable, and I could easily hold it in my mind for hours. I could mentally project the image onto the paper before me—it was as clear and distinct as if projected by a camera lucida—and trace its outlines with a pencil. My drawings were not elegant, but they were, everyone agreed, very detailed and accurate, and could bear comparison with some of the drawings in our neuroanatomy textbook. This heightening of imagery attached to everything—I had only to think of a face, a place, a picture, a paragraph in a book to see it vividly in my mind. But when the amphetamine-induced state faded, after a couple of weeks, I could


Your grip's all wrong, you're moving your head, and your leg pump is a total disaster!
Shanahan

SWINGS DOCTOR

no longer visualize, no longer project images, no longer draw—nor have I been able to do so in the decades since.

A few months ago, at a medical conference in Boston, I spoke of Torey's and Hull's experiences of blindness, and of how "enabled" Torey seemed to be by the powers of visualization he had developed, and how "disabled" Hull was—in some ways, at least—by the loss of his powers of visual imagery and memory. After my talk, a man in the audience came up to me and asked how well, in my estimation, *sighted* people could function if they had no visual imagery. He went on to say that he had no visual imagery whatever, at least none that he could deliberately evoke, and that no one in his family had any, either. Indeed, he had assumed this was the case with everyone, until he came to participate in some psychological tests at Harvard and realized that he apparently lacked a mental power that all the other students, in varying degrees, had.

"And what do you do?" I asked him, wondering what this poor man *could* do.

"I am a surgeon," he replied. "A vascular surgeon. An anatomist, too. And I design solar panels."

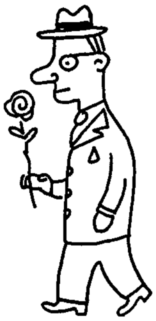
But how, I asked him, did he recognize what he was seeing?

"It's not a problem," he answered. "I guess there must be representations or models in the brain that get matched up with what I am seeing and doing. But they are not conscious. I cannot evoke them."

This seemed to be at odds with my mother's experience—she, clearly, did have extremely vivid and readily manipulable visual imagery, though (it now seemed) this may have been a bonus, a luxury, and not a prerequisite for her career as a surgeon.

Is this also the case with Torey? Is his greatly developed visual imagery, though clearly a source of much pleasure, not as indispensable as he takes it to be? Might he, in fact, have done everything he did, from carpentry to roof repair to making a model of the mind, without any conscious imagery at all? He himself raises this question.

The role of mental imagery in thinking was explored by Francis Galton, Darwin's irrepressible cousin, who wrote on subjects as various as fingerprints, eugenics, dog whistles, criminality, twins, visionaries, psychometric measures, and hereditary genius. His inquiry into visual imagery took the form of a questionnaire, with such questions as "Can you recall with distinctness the features of all near relations and many other persons? Can you at will cause your mental image . . . to sit, stand, or turn slowly around? Can you . . . see it with enough distinctness to enable you to sketch it leisurely (supposing yourself able to draw)?" The vascular surgeon would have been hopeless on such tests—indeed, it was questions such as these which had floored him when he was a student at Harvard. And yet, finally, how much had it mattered?



As to the significance of such imagery, Galton is ambiguous and guarded. He suggests, in one breath, that "scientific men, as a class, have feeble powers of visual representation" and, in another, that "a vivid visualizing faculty is of much importance in connection with the higher processes of generalized thoughts." He feels that "it is undoubtedly the fact that mechanicians, engineers and architects usually possess the faculty of seeing mental images with remarkable clearness and precision," but goes on to say, "I am, however, bound to say, that the missing faculty seems to be replaced so serviceably by other modes of conception . . . that men who declare themselves entirely deficient in the power of seeing mental pictures can nevertheless give lifelike descriptions of what they have seen, and can otherwise express themselves as if they were gifted with a vivid visual imagination. They can also become painters of the rank of Royal Academicians." I have a cousin, a professional architect, who maintains that he cannot visualize anything whatever. "How do you think?" I once asked him. He shook his head and said, "I don't know." Do any of us, finally, know how we think?

When I talk to people, blind or sighted, or when I try to think of my own internal representations, I find myself uncertain whether words, symbols, and images of various types are the primary tools of thought or whether there are forms of thought antecedent to all of these, forms of thought essentially amodal. Psychologists have sometimes spoken of "interlingua" or "mentalese," which they conceive to be the brain's own language, and Lev Vygotsky, the great Russian psychologist, used to speak of "thinking in pure meanings." I cannot decide whether this is nonsense or profound truth—it is the sort of reef I end up on when I think about thinking.

Galton's seemingly contradictory statements about imagery—is it antithetical to abstract thinking, or integral to it?—may stem from his failure to distinguish between fundamentally different levels of imagery. Simple visual imagery such as he describes may suffice for the design of a screw, an engine, or a surgical operation, and it may be relatively easy to model these essentially reproductive forms of imagery or to simulate them by constructing video games or virtual realities of various sorts. Such powers may be invaluable, but there is something passive and mechanical and impersonal about them, which makes them utterly different from the higher and more personal powers of the imagination, where there is a continual struggle for concepts and form and meaning, a calling upon all the powers of the self. Imagination dissolves and transforms, unifies and creates, while drawing upon the "lower" powers of memory and association. It is by such imagination, such "vision," that we create or construct our individual worlds.

At this level, one can no longer say of one's mental landscapes what is visual, what is auditory, what is image, what is language, what is intellectual, what is emotional—they are all fused together and imbued with our own individual perspectives and values. Such a unified vision shines out from Hull's memoir no less than from Torey's, despite the fact that one has become "nonvisual" and the other "hypervisual." What seems at first to be so decisive a difference between the two men is not, finally, a radical one, so far as personal development and sensibility go. Even though the paths they have followed might seem irreconcilable, both men have "used" blindness (if one can employ such a term for processes which are deeply mysterious, and far below, or above, the level of consciousness and voluntary control) to release their own creative capacities and emotional selves, and both have achieved a rich and full realization of their own individual worlds. ◆

LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

THE PAINTED DESERT

How Aborigines turned ancient rituals into chic contemporary art.

BY GERALDINE BROOKS

Fitzroy Crossing, in northwestern Australia, is a group of settlements set between abrupt scarps of sandstone. The weather oscillates between the furnace heat of the dry season and the lashing rains of the wet, when saturated rocks glow red against lush grasses, and wide swags of clouds hang above the floodplain. Even by the harsh measure of the Outback, it is a remote place—closer to Jakarta than to Sydney, which is some two thousand miles to the southeast.

The town was formed around 1900, and became known as the only place for hundreds of miles where the Fitzroy River was shallow enough to be crossed on horseback. The outpost now serves the region's ranchers and miners; most of the residents, however, are Aborigines who were forced off their traditional lands by white settlers during the past century. For many years, the town was impoverished and unlovely, notorious for the brawls that regularly erupted at the Crossing Inn—and for the carpet of crushed beer cans that spread so far in every direction that it became known as the Fitzroy Snowfields. More recently, the town has achieved a different reputation: it has become home to a thriving community of contemporary artists.

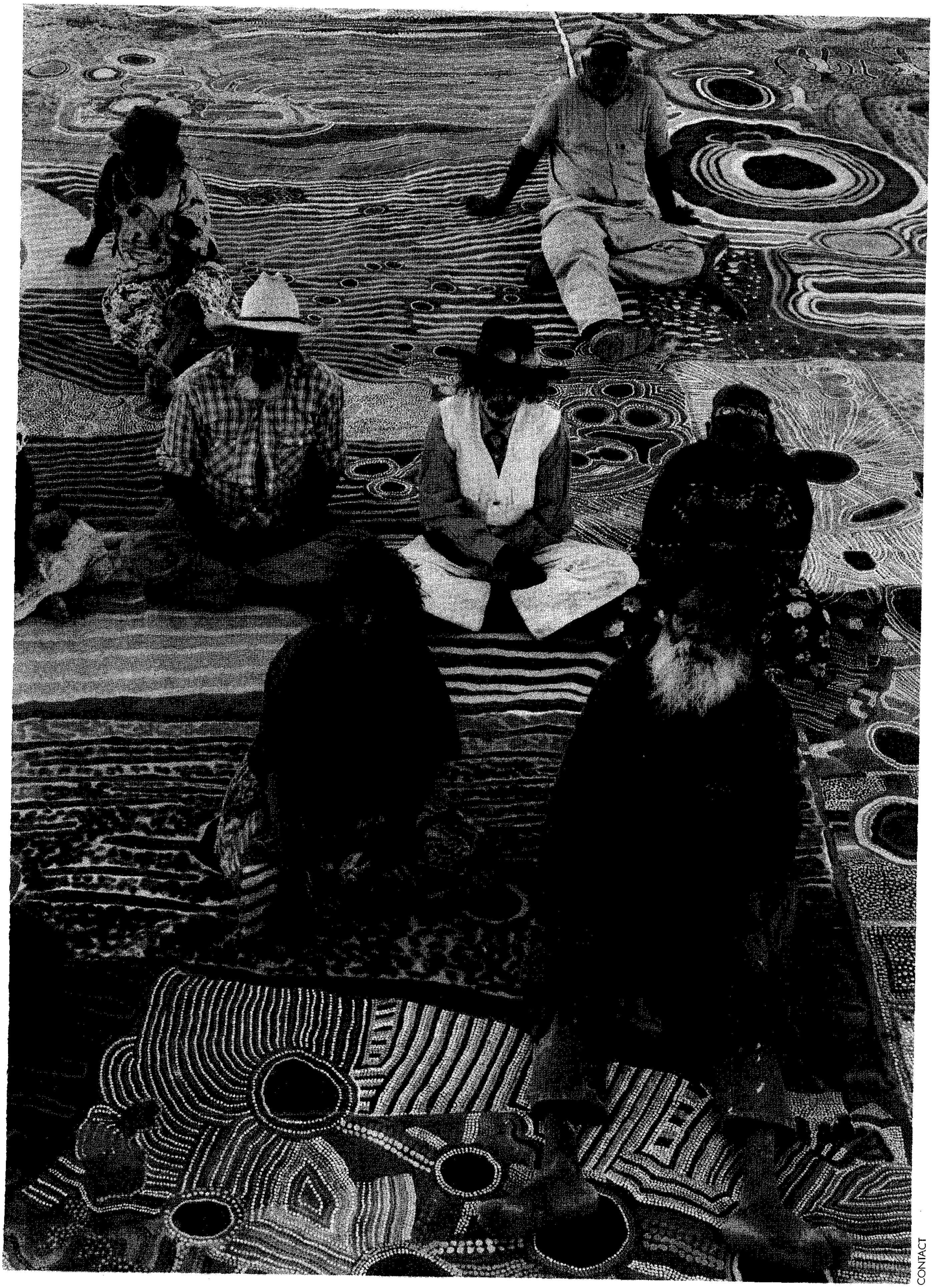
The Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency, an Aboriginal coöperative, is housed in an unprepossessing strip of metal buildings, next to a supermarket and a take-out food shop. The sky was gray on the February day when I arrived for a visit, but inside the coöperative two adjoining rooms were abloom with color. Vibrant paintings occupied every inch of wall space and were stacked in piles on the floor, ready for shipment to forthcoming exhibitions in Sydney, Darwin, and Perth. A large canvas by one of the center's best-known artists, Pijaju Peter Skipper, dominated a far wall. The principal color of the painting is red, in homage to the soil of the artist's birthplace, and the canvas is stippled with dots and cross-hatchings that call to mind the patterns of wind on sand or the minute tracks of lizards. Bisecting this elaborate field is a set of darker, more prominent tracks: human ones. The painting is called "Walking Out of Country," and it is Skipper's lament for the exodus of his people, the Walmajarri, from their homeland in the Great Sandy Desert, a parched expanse south of Fitzroy Crossing.

Not far from Skipper's large painting hung a work by his wife, Jukuna Mona Chuguna, a handsome woman whose high cheekbones are framed by a tumble of lustrous curls. The theme is the same—lost country—but whereas Skipper had applied his paint in exact, economical dabs, Chuguna had swept hers onto the canvas in wide gestures that recall the way thick ochre body paint is applied by thumb onto the breasts of women dancers in clan ceremonies. Her work evokes, but does not mimic, the action paintings of mid-twentieth-century American artists.

In Walmajarri, one of the five Aboriginal languages spoken in the Fitzroy area, a *mangkaja* is a makeshift shelter of sticks and grass thrown up for protection against the rains of the wet season. The Mangkaja Agency, which was founded in the early eighties, got its name because the first art-related structure in Fitzroy was a concrete-and-tin shed by the roadside, which was paid for by a small government grant. It was thought that unemployed and idle Aborigines could carve boomerangs there and sell them for a few dollars to passing tourists. Instead, the Aborigines started painting, and became part of a creative revival that has reshaped Australian art and drawn record crowds at exhibitions abroad.

At any time of day, the agency is a

Fitzroy Crossing residents sitting atop "Ngurrara II," a canvas created by more than sixty Aboriginal artists. Photograph by Stephen Dupont.



CONTACT

bustling place. The atmosphere is part studio, part day-care center, part old people's home. An elderly woman named Dolly Snell sat cross-legged on the floor in front of a three-foot-square canvas, applying thick rondelles of yellow acrylic in patterns that resembled spinifex, a sharp-bladed desert grass. Her giggling grandchildren played tag all around her, their swift feet sometimes cutting across the canvas, perilously close to the wet paint. Snell didn't appear to mind. In one corner, another artist, Hitler Pamba, captivated an older group of children with an account of his childhood in the desert. (Hitler is Pamba's "station name," the bleak joke of a white boss for whom Pamba once worked as a cattle drover.) Speaking in a mixture of Wangkajunga, Walmajarri, and Aboriginal "Kriol" English, Pamba told the children how he had recently visited the region where he grew up, which was dotted with salt pans, the dried-out remnants of ancient lakes. "No one's lived there for sixty years, but when I got there I could still see our tracks leading across all that salt to the place where we got water," he said. When Pamba paints, his pictures often re-create this abandoned landscape: opalescent expanses of bluish white are pierced by a green swirl that represents the vegetation surrounding the water hole.

Aboriginal painting has become popular with gallery owners throughout Australia, and Pamba and the other members of the Mangkaja coöperative are able to sell much of what they produce. This year, the sale of works by Mangkaja's fifty painters is expected to bring in more than a quarter of a million dollars. The additional income is certainly welcome, but it has not alleviated the poverty of the local Aboriginal community, which includes some twelve hundred people. For this reason, the artists in Fitzroy Crossing began a difficult discussion this past spring. Perhaps it was time, some suggested, to sell a pair of beloved canvases, "Ngurrara I" and "Ngurrara II." These densely detailed paintings, which were the joint creation of dozens of local artists, are widely considered to be masterpieces. (*Ngurrara*, which means "country" in Walmajarri, is pronounced NUR-ara.) The paintings share surface similarities with Western abstract art—they have the energy of a Pollock, the exuberant colors of a Matisse, and the fanciful geometric forms of a Miró—yet they are also intricate narrative works that relate detailed stories about the lives of the artists' ancestors. The sale of these celebrated paintings, experts had said, could bring in a tremendous amount of money.

The Aborigines would not find it easy to allow these singular records of local history to be shipped thousands of miles away. Then again, the Outback is not an ideal place to preserve fragile works of art. During a visit to a flimsy prefab bungalow near the Mangkaja center, I had my first glimpse of "Ngurrara II." "I'm ashamed for you to see how we are storing it," Karen Dayman, who works as an adviser at Mangkaja, told me. The canvas, which is twenty-six feet wide, had been rolled up inside a rough-hewn wooden crate. This makeshift container had been propped up on plastic milk crates to protect the painting during the monsoon season. Last year, it was endangered by a flood. "The water was almost up to the top step of the house," Dayman said. This year's wet season had begun, and, as we talked, a hard rain drummed on the bungalow's tin roof and fell in curtains around the veranda.

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"I love to curl up with a good book and watch television."

Aborigines have the world's oldest continuing artistic tradition. Native Australians began painting rock walls fifty thousand years ago; early Europeans would not decorate the caves of Lascaux for another thirty-five thousand years. Traditional Aboriginal art was immensely varied. In the far north, groups made elaborate "X-ray" paintings of animal skeletons on bark and rock. In the northwest, they adorned cave walls with images of *Wanjina*, spiritual beings with huge eyes and no mouths. (These powerful creatures, it was believed, observed all things but passed no judgments.) When a white explorer, George Grey, first saw depictions of *Wanjina*, in 1837, he pronounced them "far superior to what a savage race might be supposed capable of," and speculated that they might have been painted by wandering medieval knights.

Few whites ever saw the more ephemeral art forms of desert Aborigines, such as ground paintings, which were communal works fashioned directly on the sand. They were made during secret rites that celebrated the "creation ancestors"—supernatural beings who were thought to have formed every detail of the landscape, from sandhill to riverbank. The entire Australian continent, Aborigines believe, was shaped by the prehistoric travels of the creation ancestors; details about these epic journeys were passed down in narratives known as Dreamings. Each Aborigine inherited responsibility for a particular Dreaming story and the parcel of land on which it took place. In the desert, a ground painting depicting a Dreaming myth traditionally employed dots of colored ochre or tufts of plant fibre, carefully placed by the individual who had inherited the right to tell it. Soon after a ground-painting ceremony ended, the image was obliterated. As a result, much Aboriginal imagery remained unknown to outsiders.

There are plant species indigenous to Australia, such as the *Hakea bakeriana*, that bear fruit only after the extreme stress of drought or bushfire; the flowering of Aboriginal contemporary art is a similar phenomenon. The genre's origins are typically traced to the center of the continent, in Papunya, a dusty village a hundred and fifty miles west of Alice Springs. After the Australian government adopted a policy of assimilation, in the early fifties, nomadic Aborigines were forcibly resettled in Papunya. The government offered the town's black residents squalid housing that was meant to facilitate their integration into white society. In 1971, a white schoolteacher named Geoffrey Bardon arrived in town and discovered a place of disease, violence, and despair. Papunya was, he later wrote, "a death camp in all but name."

As part of his instruction, Bardon gave his pupils a small supply of acrylic paint. It was not the students, however, but the town elders who seized upon this new material. Adult Aborigines, still reeling from displacement and facing the threat of cultural annihilation, used the paint to make a lasting record of designs and images that had previously been used only in clan ceremonies. For the first time, the ancient iconography of desert Aborigines was rendered in modern mediums. At Papunya, the pictorial vocabulary of ground paintings was transferred from ochres to acrylics and from desert earth to concrete walls. The graphic symbols have multiple meanings. Concentric circles can represent sacred rocks, campsites, or campfires. U-shapes signify both humans and spirit beings. (This symbol is derived from the shape left in the sand by a person sitting cross-legged.) Bardon was delighted by what the Aborigines created. He encouraged the artists, and brought them boards and canvas. He could not satisfy the Aborigines' demand, however. Within a few months, almost every flat surface in the village, from old fruit boxes to hubcaps and floor tiles, was covered with acrylic paint.

"The body's been in the water for a long time."

Another transformation occurred around the same time, hundreds of miles away, in the area south of Fitzroy Crossing. The Great Sandy Desert had been of little interest to white cattle ranchers, and traditional Aboriginal life survived there well into the fifties. Skipper and Chuguna, the Mangkaja artists, were both young adults before they encountered a white person. Skipper, a self-confident man in his seventies whose salt-and-pepper beard extends to his impressive belly, recalled his first brush with the modern world: when he was a teenager, an automobile passed within view, and Skipper ran and hid in the bush—afraid that the large eyes of the strange beast might be able to see him.

Chuguna recalled that living in the desert had been difficult. In the dangerous heat of the dry season, many mothers would leave their toddlers in a shady place alongside a water-filled bark bowl, while they foraged for miles on the blistering sand, gathering wattle seeds or ant eggs. In the late fifties, she said, there was a drought, and clan members began to suffer from malnutrition. Skipper and Chuguna, who had just married, left home, walking north in search of work on white-owned cattle stations.

During the sixties, ranchers began pushing blacks out of the ranching industry, and Aborigines throughout Western Australia drifted toward the fringes of white towns, which offered little work and plenty of alcohol. Fitzroy Crossing, where Skipper and Chuguna finally settled, in 1970, was such a place; Turkey Creek, to the northeast, was another. It was in Turkey Creek that an artistic revival parallel to the one at Papunya began. This time, however, it was sparked by an Aboriginal stockman named Rover Thomas.

Thomas's interest in painting had spiritual origins. On Christmas Day in 1974, a devastating cyclone flattened the city of Darwin, which is the main center of European influence in northern Australia. Aboriginal elders interpreted the devastation as a manifestation of the anger of ancestral spirits known as Rainbow Serpents, who were said to be enraged that white influence had caused neglect of their land and rituals. Thomas was one of many Aborigines who reacted to reports of the catastrophe in a metaphysical way. He told friends and family that he had been visited by a spirit, who offered him a vision of a new ritual, the Krill Krill. At the first performance of this ceremony, dancers carried wooden boards that Thomas had designed with earth-toned fields of ochre.

Around the same time, a nurse named Mary Mácha went to work for the Western Australian government's Native Welfare Department. Her job was to raise money for impoverished communities by selling their crafts. At Turkey Creek, she met Rover Thomas, who told her that he wanted to paint. Convinced of his talent, Mácha set up a studio for Thomas in her garage. She would prop his pictures against the fences in the narrow lane behind her house and sell them to anyone she could interest. Eventually, collectors started seeking out Thomas's graceful, minimalist work. Painted in natural earth pigments, their creamy browns and blacks evoked the rounded rock forms of the Kimberly ranges nearby.

Wally Caruana, then a curator at the National Gallery of Australia, was among the first connoisseurs to appreciate Thomas's spare and unusual paintings. In 1984, he arranged for the gallery's director to meet Mácha. Afterward, Caruana recalled, the director told him, "You introduced me to a grandmother with a plastic shopping bag, and in it were the most marvellous paintings I've ever seen."

The work had arrived just as there was an audience primed to receive it. "We had learned to appreciate contemporary movements such as Abstract Expressionism and minimalism, and then suddenly here is this work that has the same aesthetic, yet is loaded with multiple meanings," Caruana said. The visual correspondence between Aboriginal works and modern art was all the more striking, given that artists like Thomas had never studied Western painting.

In 1990, Caruana invited Thomas to Canberra, so that the artist could see, for the first time, an extensive collection of modern art. Caruana was walking with Thomas through the National Gallery when he suddenly stopped in front of one painting. "Who's that bugger who paints like me?" he asked. The painting, "1957 #20," by Mark Rothko, is eerily similar to Thomas's work.

Thomas, who died in 1998, was quickly embraced by the Western art market. A 1991 painting depicting a waterfall seems to bend the picture plane at the point where the channels of water reach the cliff edge and then cascade downward. To Caruana, the painting "represents the epitome of Thomas's approach." Two years ago, he acquired the work, titled "All That Big Rain Coming from Top Side," for the National Gallery of Australia, at a price of about four hundred thousand dollars. It was a record for Aboriginal art sold at auction.

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I'm stuck in this spot!

Thomas's success inspired many other Aborigines to paint. In 1992, his sister, Nyuju Stumpy Brown, married Hitler Pamba and settled in a community near Fitzroy Crossing. Brown started to paint her own images of lost country, and Pamba followed suit.

A neighbor, Pijaju Peter Skipper, began to make simple works that reproduced *punarrapunarra*—the kinds of repetitive patterns he might once have incised on a shield. Skipper's sustained feelings of exile, however, eventually led to a more profound form of artistic expression. When he describes his work, he uses two Walmajarri words, *wangarr* and *mangi*, that have no precise English equivalents. *Wangarr* is the ghost image of someone; *mangi* is a combination of the spirit and the physical trace of a person, which remains discernible even after he has left. When whites mined the earth or made roads, Skipper explained, "they scraped the *mangi* off the land," and the essence of the past inhabitants was lost. For him, painting was a way to make *wangarr*, or shadow images, of what was now gone, and thus restore *mangi*. Skipper began obsessively painting the water hole for which his father had been the hereditary custodian. Its distinctive quatrefoil shape, rendered in acid greens or vivid oranges, became a focal point in many of his works.

In 1988, one of Skipper's paintings was sent to New York for the Asia Society's exhibition "Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia." The show drew the largest attendance ever at the society, and its enthusiastic critical reception began to change the way Aboriginal art was viewed. Although the paintings were informed by thousands of years of tradition, they were hardly folk art. Indeed, the Aboriginal artists seemed rather postmodern: painters like Skipper had cleverly appropriated old imagery in order to create something new.

In 1994, Sotheby's ratified this emerging view by including Aboriginal paintings in an exhibition of contemporary art. Until then, Aboriginal works had always been grouped with ethnographic curios. The paintings attracted bidding from all over the world. Sotheby's department of Aboriginal art has since blossomed; this year, sales are expected to reach four million dollars.

Tim Klingender, the Sotheby's expert who mounted the 1994 exhibit, divides his energy between Sotheby's clients—whom he calls "the richest two hundred thousand people on the planet"—and Aboriginal communities, where the living conditions and the life expectancy rival those in the most dismal outposts of the developing world. At gallery openings, Klingender talks about Aboriginal art with a slick marketer's spin; at home in Sydney, he speaks earnestly about his efforts to champion a culture once viewed as pathetic and doomed.

Sotheby's draws criticism from Aborigines and others who believe that artists should get a resale royalty on the sometimes staggering sums achieved at auction. The Papunya artist Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula, for example, sold his canvas "Water Dreaming at Kalipinypa" for seventy-five dollars to a visiting artist in 1972. It ended up hanging in the owner's laundry shed, just above the washing machine. In 1996, the owner of the painting asked Klingender to evaluate the work. Warangkula's painting, he declared, was "a total masterpiece"; the work's meshlike layering of stippled dots only partly veiled secret ceremonial objects and symbols that would become fully obscured in later Papunya works. Klingender's sales pitch was effective: Sotheby's sold "Water Dreaming" at auction in 1997 for a hundred and fifteen thousand dollars; in 2000, it sold the work to a New York collector for two hundred and sixty-three thousand dollars. Warangkula, who died in 2001, received nothing from either of the sales, even though at the time he was crippled, partially blind, and destitute. Klingender told the Aboriginal community that the sales had revived interest in Warangkula's art, allowing him to make a good living in his final years. The curator also organized a charity auction that raised funds for a dialysis clinic near the remote community of Kintore, where Warangkula died.

Last fall, Klingender received a telephone call from Karen Dayman, the adviser for the Mangkaja coöperative. The artists in Fitzroy Crossing, she said, were considering selling one of the "Ngurrara" paintings. Klingender was surprised. The "Ngurrara" canvases, he said, were "among the greatest works of indigenous art ever created"; moreover, they had a powerful political significance for the people of the Great Sandy Desert.

In 1992, the Australian government first recognized the right of Aborigines to claim legal ownership of their ancestral lands—provided that they could show evidence of having an enduring connection with them. Before proceeding to court, Aboriginal groups had to make their case before a Native Title Tribunal. Frustrated by their inability to articulate their arguments in courtroom English, the people of Fitzroy Crossing decided to paint their "evidence." They would set down, on canvas, a document that would show how each person related to a particular area of the Great Sandy Desert—and to the long stories that had been passed down for generations.

"Ngurrara I," the first attempt, was a canvas that measured sixteen feet by twenty-six feet and was worked on by nineteen artists. It was completed in 1996. But Skipper and Chuguna, in particular, didn't feel that it properly reflected all the important places and stories, so more than forty additional artists were enlisted to produce a more definitive version. In 1997, "Ngurrara II," which was twenty-six feet by thirty-two feet, was rolled out before a plenary session of the Native Title Tribunal. It was, one tribunal member said, the most eloquent and overwhelming evidence that had ever been presented there. The Aborigines could proceed to court.

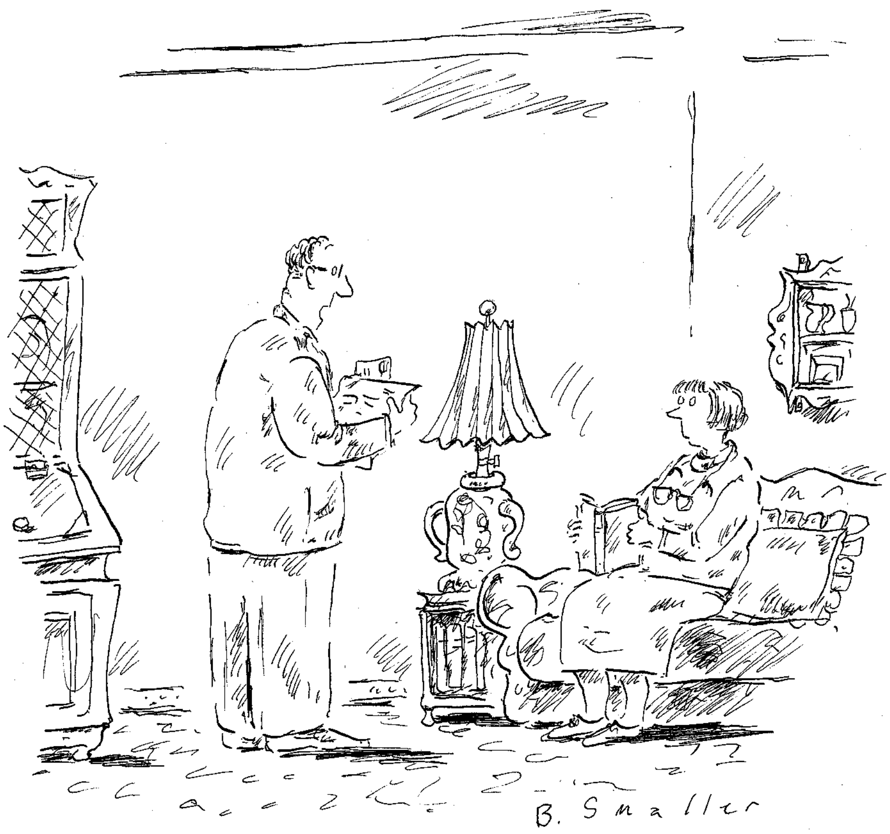
The case, however, was caught up in a logjam of similar cases contested by mining and farming interests. (If a land claim was validated in court, companies that operated on Aboriginal property would have to negotiate with the traditional owners and perhaps pay substantial fees.) Meanwhile, many of the elderly artists who had worked on the "Ngurrara" paintings were living out their last years in poverty. Several died.

On the phone, Dayman asked if Klingender would come to Fitzroy Crossing and explain the mechanics of an auction sale to the artists, so that they could make an informed decision. In their conversation, Klingender and Dayman discussed how a sale might affect the community's stalled land claim. "The work is so significant that a government institution will almost certainly want to try to buy it for the nation, and that would be ironic, because the nation has yet to acknowledge the claim," Klingender said. He was troubled by the thought that such significant paintings would leave the community—and be lost, as the land had been, to future generations. Yet he concluded that a sale would ultimately benefit the community, not least by exposing its creativity to an international audience.

In February, Klingender made the long journey from Sydney to Fitzroy Crossing, and I went with him. The flight to the coastal town of Broome took eight hours. We then headed east in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. A few miles outside Broome, a road labelled Great Northern Highway turned into a meagre sliver of bitumen; it was frequently submerged by sparkling freshets of water that peeled backward, like breaking waves, against the vehicle's immense wheels. The mangrove coast quickly gave way to the pindan—vast, unpeopled stretches of black buffle grass and golden sedge punctuated by tall termite mounds. After a half day of driving, we arrived in Fitzroy Crossing.

The night before the meeting to discuss the fate of the paintings, Klingender drove from Fitzroy Crossing to a settlement ten miles away called Bayulu, where several of the most prominent Mangkaja artists, including Skipper and Chuguna, live in bleak, unpainted concrete-block houses, their glassless windows barred in response to break-ins by local drunks and drug addicts.

In such communities, the earnings of someone like Skipper, who paints irregularly and might make fourteen thousand dollars in a good year, are divided and shared by an extended family; many residents have no income beyond welfare checks. Skipper and Chuguna also have community responsibilities that limit



"My pension has been renegotiated, and in lieu of a monthly check I'll receive a crateful of seasonal fruit."

their artistic output. Skipper, as an elder, is often called away on secret ceremonial business. Chuguna teaches the Walmajarri language at the community school.

A sign at the entrance to Bayulu proclaimed that no alcohol or gambling was allowed in the settlement, but as Klingender's vehicle churned up the muddy road, scattering packs of skinny dogs, several outdoor card games were in progress. Skipper was engrossed in one of them. The artists' houses were as modest as those of their neighbors, but many of them had used their extra income to purchase refrigerators and washing machines, as well as four-wheel-drive vehicles. Klingender told the artists about the next day's meeting, and offered to arrange transport for those who needed it.

The sale of the "Ngurrara" paintings would bring the biggest windfall yet to the area. That evening, Klingender returned to Fitzroy Crossing and discussed the paintings with Dayman. He noted that "Ngurrara II" was particularly valuable. "I don't think you should, and I'm not advising you to, but if you do sell the big one I estimate that you'd realize quite a bit of money," he told her. The painting, he said, could fetch about a million dollars.

The next morning, the artists who had created the "Ngurrara" paintings gathered inside an old mechanic's shed in Fitzroy Crossing. None of them were younger than sixty; some looked impossibly frail, leaning on the arms of younger relatives or laboring through the mud in wheelchairs. Inside the shed, a slight stench of old motor oil mingled with the scent of drying paint and human sweat.

After some discussion, a *wangki*, or decision, was reached. "Ngurrara II" would stay, for now, in Fitzroy Crossing. But as the sun beat down on the tin roof and rising humidity made the shed's interior feel like a baker's oven, a consensus emerged that "Ngurrara I"—which Skipper referred to as "that little shorty one"—might be "a little bit freer."

The artists decided to take a fresh look at "Ngurrara I," which many of them hadn't seen in years. It took three people to carry the canvas, and several more to unroll it over the dingy carpet that covered the workshop's earth floor. Suddenly, the shed was filled with the colors and forms of the desert: swirls, dots, concentric circles, serpentine curls. A strong, dark line with circular protrusions bisects the canvas: it represents the Canning Stock Route, a series of wells sunk by white settlers in the early nineteen-hundreds for the convenience of inland cattle drovers. At the base of the painting—to the southwest, if you view the canvas as a map—Hitler Pamba's salt-pan country spreads out in his characteristic opalescent wash. The gestural swirls of his wife, Stumpy Brown, depict the water holes that abut the livestock path to the east. Just above, Skipper's signature quatrefoil, its acid green the brightest hue in the composition, draws the eye upward, cushioned by Chuguna's more muted, less structured ovals. The sinuous curve of a snake spirit defines the top of the canvas.

The elderly artists began slowly walking across the canvas, pointing, their voices rising with excitement. To anyone versed in the "Don't touch" conventions of Western art, the sight of people walking on a masterpiece—in mud-crusted stock boots—was startling. It was also a reminder of how non-Western and unmaterialistic Aboriginal society remains. After the artists had a chance to reacquaint themselves with the painting, Dayman introduced Klingender, who, she said, worked "for a mob called Sotheby's," adding, "That mob is looking around all the time for anything that they might be able to sell."

Klingender rose to his feet. "If you want to sell this painting here, I will take this painting, get a stretcher made for it, photograph it, and put it in a book like this one," he said, brandishing a glossy auction catalogue. "Then I'll take the painting, put it in an airplane to New York, and put it up on a wall there in an art gallery, then back in an airplane to Sydney and to Melbourne."

As a translator repeated Klingender's words, Skipper, a veteran of city exhibitions, interjected his own elaboration. "So people can see 'em," he said to his fellow-artists. "So they can know that thing and get it into their brain, 'Right. I want to buy that thing.' "

"After we show it," Klingender said, "people who've seen it will all come together and try to buy the painting or call us on the phone and say, 'I'd like to give so much,' and someone else will say, 'I'd like to give more.' It's a competition, and the winner gets the painting."

A painter named Tommy May, who, as a stockman, had delivered cattle to livestock auctions, offered his own analogy. "Just like selling a bull," he said.

"Exactly," Klingender said. "This painting is a No. 1 breeder bull." Klingender explained that the buyer might be the National Gallery of Australia, or a foreign museum. "It might be just one person who'll put it in his house," he said. Laughter erupted at the thought of any one person's having a house big enough for such a painting.

Klingender explained that if the artists wanted the painting to stay in Australia he could sell it with that stipulation. "But the money would be less," he said. "Either way, if you want to sell it this year the decision has to be soon, so it can be put into the book."

Skipper stood up, and said that he was worried about how much the painting would fetch. There were murmurs of assent around the room, and reminiscences about other sums that had come and gone with little lasting effect. Chuguna voiced this financial concern as well. Her tone then shifted, and she used the word *ngalkarla*—which means a familiar sound or a rhythm heard from a distance. In this context, it meant "spreading the word": if the painting was widely seen, it could convey to outsiders the enduring ties that exist between the artists and their land.

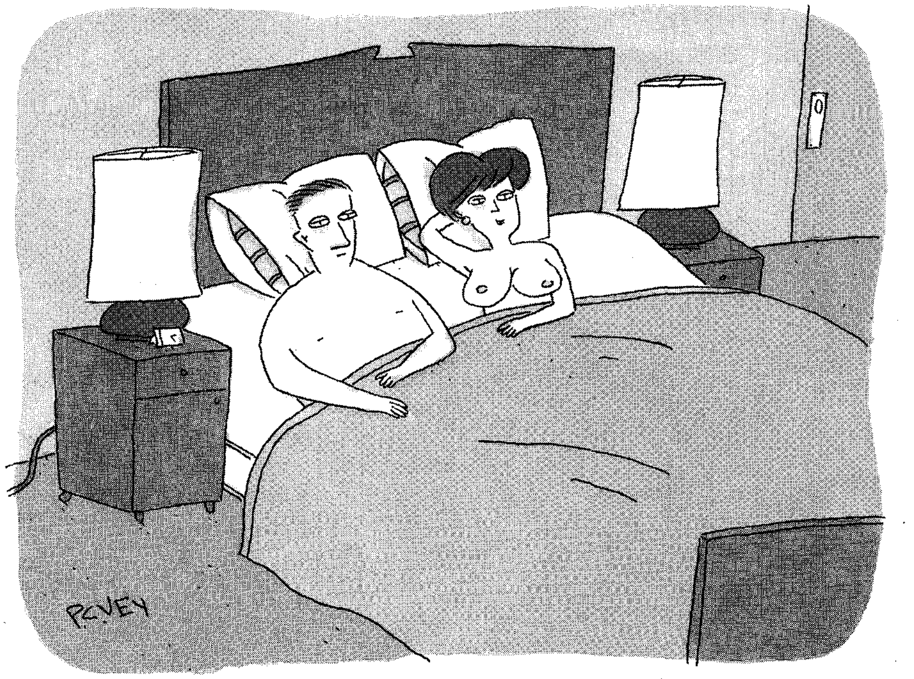
After further discussion, the artists concluded that they wanted to get more than twenty thousand dollars for the painting. Klingender smiled. "We're on safe ground there," he whispered to me. His estimate for "Ngurrara I" is about three hundred thousand dollars, and, since Sotheby's had decided not to charge its usual commission, the artists would receive almost the entire sum. Because auction results are uncertain, especially with a unique work, Klingender did not share his estimate with the group. He simply said that he thought their expectations would be met.

A brief, desultory discussion continued, mostly in Walmajarri. People walked around the painting. Someone spilled a glass of cordial on it. Chuguna wandered outside and gazed up at the gathering clouds. "Big rain coming," she said. "Got to get back to Bayulu and look after them kids coming home from school." Suddenly, without a vote or any dramatic declaration, the artists told Dayman they had reached a decision. The *wangki* was that the "little shorty one" was free to go.

There was, indeed, a big rain coming. A cyclone moved close to the coast that night, deluging roads and closing airports. After three days of being immersed in the world view of the Walmajarri, I wondered briefly if the snake spirits were angry about the artists' decision to sell the painting. Apparently not: the cyclone never touched down on land. Klingender and I made it back to Broome before the Great Northern Highway became inundated.

Two weeks later, "Ngurrara I" arrived in Melbourne, where Sotheby's restorers cleaned every inch of the canvas with water and ethyl alcohol. "They said they couldn't believe what came off it," Klingender told me. "Buckets of red mud." The canvas was gently ironed flat and then placed on an elaborately engineered stretcher; a new black border was added to mask the work's irregular edges. Klingender rented the Museum of Contemporary Art, an Art Deco building opposite the Opera House on Sydney's Circular Quay, for a glittering pre-auction showing. The auction itself is scheduled to take place on July 28th, in Sydney.

In Fitzroy Crossing, "Ngurrara II" awaited a different fate. As "Ngurrara I" was readied for display before the art world's élite, the big canvas went on display in the bush. The Aborigines—the old artists and their young descendants—decided to take the painting on a journey to the place that it depicted. This past April, about thirty Aborigines set off from Fitzroy Crossing in a convoy of battered trucks and four-wheel drives. They made camp in a sandy bend of river on Cherrabun Station, the vast cattle ranch where Skipper and Chuguna had first encountered white people, almost half a century ago. In the bright sunlight of a clear morning, the canvas was unfurled on the ground. Among the artists who had come on the journey was Spider Snell, who, at just under eighty years old, is an elegant and surprisingly vigorous dancer. Snell is the custodian of an important ritual dance, the Kurtal ceremony, which is performed while carrying long, thread-wrapped boughs that represent the rain clouds controlled by the snake spirits. Accompanying him were three young apprentice dancers, boys who usually attend boarding school south of Perth, thousands of miles away. For three days, the old man shared his stories with the young ones—stories of dreaming, of water, of survival, and of a past kept alive for them in the thick swirls of paint beneath their feet. ♦



"Thank you for helping me grieve."

FICTION

VIEW FROM A HEADLOCK

BY JONATHAN LETHEM

"Let me see it for a minute."

Let me see it: you saw a basketball or a pack of baseball cards or a plastic water gun by taking it into your hands, and what happened after that was in doubt. Ownership depended mostly on not letting anyone see anything. If you let a kid see a bottle of Yoo-hoo for a minute, he'd drink what was left of it.

"Let me see it, let me check it out. I only want to take it for a ride."

Dylan Ebdus gripped the handlebars. His father had pried off the training wheels the day before, and Dylan still wobbled, still scuffed with his sneakers groping away from the pedals to steady and brake against the sidewalk. "Only if you stay on the block," Dylan said, miserably.

"You afraid I'm gonna take it? I just want a ride. You get it back after that, you got it all day, man. Just let me go around the block."

It was a trap or a puzzle, the way Robert Woolfolk already knew to work Dylan's guilt. And the empty block conspired to leave Dylan alone to solve it. Robert Woolfolk was a kid who carried a vacuum around with him, or revealed by his presence the vacuum on Dean Street, the expanse of moments when no one saw and no one knew what happened in plain sight, when all of the block was shrouded in daylight.

Robert Woolfolk added his hands to the handlebars beside Dylan's and tugged gently at the bike.

"Stay on the block."

"Around once, that's all."

"No, I mean stay in front of the house."

"What, you think I'm not coming back? Just around the block."

What came out of Robert Woolfolk's mouth was petition and chant, irresistible in its illogic. His eyes, meanwhile, were hard, a little bored.

"Just once around."

Robert Woolfolk's legs were too long to unfold in the span between seat and pedals, so he rode with his knees doubled and knobbing up near the handlebars, like a clown on a tricycle. Then he changed his approach, elevated his hips above the seat to stand on the pedals and pump side to side, elbows flaring. The bike teetered, annexed to Robert Woolfolk's stretching limbs. Like that, a vanishing pile of elbows, he took the bike around the corner of Nevins.

How long did it take to go around the block?

How long was twice as long as that?

The tonguelike latch of Dylan's black ironwork gate rattled with the vibration of a bus going by. Though there were no trees on the Nevins end of Dean Street, red fallen leaves had blown into the gutter from somewhere. The plastic milk cartons in front of the bodega claimed you could be fined or go to jail for not returning them to May Creek Farm, Incorporated, a fairly unlikely destination if you gave it any thought.

The afternoon withered like a balloon around Dylan on his stoop, waiting for Robert Woolfolk to return. The minutes accumulated, stacked up indifferently on the distant face of the Williamsburg Savings Bank tower clock. Nevins Street might as well have been a canyon into which Robert Woolfolk had vanished like a cartoon coyote, wordlessly, trailing puffs of dust. It was pretty much as if there had never been a bike.

The last thing Dylan Ebdus's mother, Rachel, had taught him, before she left Dylan's father and vanished from their home, was the word "gentrification." They were walking home to Dean Street from Flatbush Avenue, on a rare jaunt past the slummy blocks east of Nevins. Rachel was trying, perhaps, to make him understand Brooklyn, the world into which she was about to abandon him.

There were two worlds, anyway. In one, his father paced upstairs, creaked chairs, painted, while his mother, downstairs, played records, ran water over dishes, laughed on the telephone, her voice trailing up the curve of the long stair. His mother's spaces—the parlor, full of her books and records, the kitchen, where she cooked and laughed and argued on the phone, her table littered with newspapers and cigarettes and wineglasses—were for Dylan full of unpredictability and unrest, like his mother herself. Dylan's solitude, which his father left unbruised, his mother burst like a grape. She might clutch him and, with fingers kneading his skull through his hair, say, "You're so beautiful, so beautiful, you're such a beautiful boy," or just as likely sit apart from him smoking a cigarette and say, "Where did you come from? Why are you here? Why am I here?" or "You know, precious child, that your father is insane." She was wild with information he couldn't yet use: Nixon was a criminal, the Dodgers moved to California, Chinese food gives you a headache, Muhammad Ali resisted the war and went to jail, Hitchcock's British films were better than his American ones, circumcision was unnecessary but women preferred it. Dylan worked Rachel's margins, dodging her main force to dip sidelong into what he could make sense of. He tiptoed close under the cover of Rachel's monologue, thinking it was another phone call, to find someone seated at her table instead, drinking iced tea, sharing Rachel's ashtray, laughing, listening, detecting Dylan's footfalls, which Rachel had ignored. Then Rachel would stir from her chair, cigarette in her fingers, and usher Dylan to the front door, point out the children playing on the sidewalk, insist that he join them. Rachel had a program, a plan. She had grown up a Brooklyn street kid and so would Dylan. And so she'd eject him from the first of his two worlds, the house, into the second. The outside, the block. Dean Street. Brooklyn.

"Gentrification" was a Nixon word, uncool. "If someone asks you, say you live in Gowanus," she said. "Don't be ashamed. Boerum Hill is pretentious bullshit." Rachel sprayed language as the hydrant opened by the Puerto Rican kids around the corner on Nevins on the hottest days that year sprayed water, unstoppered, gushing. "Never let me hear you say the word 'nigger,' " she said, whispering it heavily, lusciously. "That's the only word you can't ever say, not even to yourself. In Brooklyn Heights they call them *animals*, they call the projects *a zoo*. Those uptight reactionaries deserve the break-ins. They ought to lose their quadraphonic stereos. We're here to live. Gowanus Canal, Gowanus Houses, Gowanus people. The Creature from the Gowanus Lagoon!" She inflated her cheeks and curled her fingers and attacked him. Her raven hair haloed in sunlight, her fingertips stained with nicotine or marijuana.

Brooklyn was actually simple compared with his mother.

DETAIL: MATT HARNETT, "THE PUMP" (1997)

"A gang from the Gowanus Houses picked up a fifth grader after school and took him into the park and they had a knife and they were daring each other and they *cut off his balls*," she told him. "He didn't fight or scream or anything. It's not too soon for you to know, my profound child, the world is nuttier than a fruitcake. Run if you can't fight, run and scream 'fire' or 'rape,' be wilder than they are, wear flames in your hair, that's my recommendation."

Rachel wasn't fully responsible for what she said, Dylan knew. She was afraid, too. Dylan's role was to unravel what she said and ignore ninety per cent of it, to solve her.

"That beautiful black man who moved next door is Barrett Rude, Jr., he's a singer, he was in the Distinctions, he's got this amazing voice, he sounds just like Sam Cooke. I actually once saw them, opening for the Stones. His son is your age. He's going to be your new best friend before the end of the summer, that's my prediction."

It was the last of Rachel's setups. Her last chance to steer him into a Brooklyn future.

Dylan Ebdus, one-man integration unit.

"You like comics?" Mingus Rude said, the first day they met.

"Sure," Dylan said, unsure.

Mingus Rude excavated four comic books from his closet floor, *Daredevil #77*, *Ghost Rider #4*, *Doctor Strange #12*, *The Incredible Hulk #68*. They'd been tenderly handled to death, corners rounded, paper browned by hot, attentive breath, pages chewed by eyes. "MINGUS RUDE" was written in slanted ballpoint capitals on each first interior page.

Mingus read certain panels aloud, incanting them, shaping Dylan's attention, shaping his own. Dylan felt himself permeated by some ray of attention. He felt an uncanny warmth in the half of his chest that was turned toward Mingus.

"You know what they say now? Doctor Strange could take the Incredible Hulk by making some kind of mystical cage but he couldn't take Thor because Thor's a godlike figure, as long as he doesn't lose his hammer. If he loses his hammer dude's nothing better than a cripple."

"Who's Thor?"

"You'll see. You know where to buy comics?"

"Uh, yeah."

"Ever steal comics?"

"No."

"It's no big thing. You go to camp this year?"

"No." *No year*, Dylan almost said. He'd found an artifact on Mingus's dresser, a sort of tuning fork.

"That's a pick," said Mingus.

"Oh."

"Like a comb, for black hair. Want to see a gold record?"

Dylan nodded mutely, dropped the pick. Mingus Rude was a world, an exploding bomb of possibilities. Dylan was already jealous, wondering how long he'd be able to keep the new kid to himself.

They crept upstairs. Barrett Rude, Jr., had placed his bed opposite the heavily ornate marble mantelpiece, behind the shaded light of the tall windows, the showpiece windows meant for front parlors filled with pianos and upholstery, eighteenth-century Bibles on stands, who knew what else. Barrett Rude, Jr.,'s bed, which lay on the floor there under the scrolled Dutch ceiling, was a wide flat bag filled, as Mingus Rude demonstrated in passing with a neat two-palmed shove, with actual *water*, an undulating sea trapped in slick sheets. The two gold records were, oddly, just what their name promised, gold records, 45s, glued to white matting and framed in stained aluminum, not up on the bare walls but propped on the crowded mantel beside balled dollar bills and empty packs of Kools.

Mingus led Dylan to the back yard, where they winged rocks into the sky, let them plop into the Puerto Ricans' yard. The air smelled like somebody's arm up close. You could hear the steady *ding* of a Mister Softee truck on Bergen Street, probably with a string of the usual kids hanging on it.

"I guess you know my mother's white," Mingus said.

"Sure."

"White women like black men, you heard that, right?"

"Uh, sure."

"My father don't talk to that lying bitch no more." He followed this with a sharp laugh of self-surprise. "He paid a million dollars for me. That's what he had to pay to get me back, a million *cold*. You can ask him if you think I'm lying."

"I believe you."

"I don't *care* if you believe me, it's true."

Dylan looked at Mingus Rude's lips and eyes, his exact brownness, took it in. Dylan wanted to read Mingus Rude like a language, wanted to know if the new kid had changed Dean Street or only changed Dylan himself by arriving here. Mingus Rude breathed through his mouth. The palms of his hands were as white as Dylan's. He wore corduroys. Anything was possible, really.

A million-dollar kid doesn't belong on Dean Street, Dylan wanted to say. The word "million," even.

Mingus Rude was a scant four months older than Dylan Ebdus, but those months hit the calendar such that Mingus was a grade ahead. He'd start sixth grade this year, at the Intermediate School 293 Annex, in the turf of the Gowanus Houses: no man's land. If Mingus were four months younger, then he and Dylan would have been heading to grade five at P.S. 38 together.

A grade of school was a bridge in mist. No way to picture where it touched land again, or who you'd be when it did.

You met zones everywhere. The schoolyard was neighborhoods: black, black girl, Puerto Rican, basketball, handball, left behind. Black girls had a language of partial words, chants harder to learn than anything in class. The place was a cage for growing, nothing else. You couldn't be left back from fish sticks and sloppy joes.

There was a general noise at the edges you'd begun to detect, akin to indecipherable ballpoint desktop gougings. A scribbled voice. The first few times someone said, "Hey, white boy," it sounded like a mistake. You had to be guided into the new relation by the girls, the boys were actually a little shy about it.

Older kids bunched at the school entrances and in corners of the yard. Robert Woolfolk was among them, the lurkers. Even standing in one place, Woolfolk moved like a sprained knee, like he was forever angling a too-small bike around the corner of Nevins.

Dylan Ebdus and Mingus Rude: one crossing the street to dodge a clump of kids from the projects, keeping his white face hidden in a jacket hood, the other

"It won't last—they can't afford each other."

hanging in loose gangs of black kids after school, then walking alone to Dean Street. The two of them, a fifth grader and a sixth, stranded in zones, in selves. White kid, black kid, *Captain America* and *The Falcon*, *Luke Cage* and *Iron Fist*. Returning from different schools to the same block, two brownstones, two fathers, Abraham Ebdus and Barrett Rude, Jr., each wrinkling back foil edges on TV dinners to discover peas and carrots that had invaded the mashed potatoes and Salisbury steak, setting them on the table in dour silence. Dinner in silence or to the sound of the television drowned by the baying of sirens, Nevins Street a fire lane, a path of destruction, the projects flaring up again, an apartment on the eighteenth floor with a smoldering mattress pushed halfway out the window, stuck. The grid of zones, the huddled brownstone streets between prison and projects, Wyckoff Gardens, Gowanus Houses. The whores on Nevins and Pacific. The high-school kids pouring out of Sarah J. Hale all afternoon, black girls already bigger than *yo mama*, Third Avenue another no man's land, the empty lot where *they raped that girl*. The halfway house. It was all halfway, you walked out of your halfway school and tried to chart a course through your halfway neighborhood to make it back to your own halfway house, your half-empty house.

Afternoons after school, Dylan could hear the telephone ring from the kitchen while he sat out on his stoop, waiting, watching, afternoons sliding to twilight, as the traffic trickled down Nevins, mothers walked kindergartners home from the Y.W.C.A., buses drifted like humming loaves to the stoplight, waited, drifted on. It was a season of vanishing, of a silence like raw stupidity, like the unbearable ticking silence of a teacher expecting an answer from a kid everyone knew couldn't even say his own name right.

Let his father answer the phone, if he could even hear it. Let him say she's not here. Dylan's father lacked Rachel's street-readiness. His disapproval or his affection were usually aspects of a floating arrangement of father-notions, largely sonic: footsteps pacing overhead, a voice descending stairs.

One or two afternoons a week Mingus would lope down the block and raise his hand in greeting. He carried his notebook and textbooks loose under his arm, no bag, and he'd clatter them on the stoop carelessly, expressing something less than utter disdain and more than total mastery. They never discussed fifth or sixth grade, stuff too basic and mysterious to mention. Instead they read comics, shoulders hunched to protect the flimsy covers from the wind, puzzling out the last dram, the last square inch of information, the credits, the letters page, the copyright, the Sea Monkeys ads, *the insult that made a man out of Mac*. Then, just when Dylan had thought he was alone, Dean Street came back to life, Mingus Rude knowing everyone, saying yo to a million different kids coming out of Ramirez's store with a Yoo-hoo or a Pixy Stix, to Alberto fetching Schlitz and Marlboros for his older brother. Mothers calling kids inside, the bus lit inside now, fat ladies coming home from offices at the Board of Education, on Livingston Street, their weary shapes like black teeth inside the glowing mouth of the bus, the light fading, street lights buzzing as they lit, their arched poles decorated with boomeranged-up sneakers, and Mingus Rude saying, one dying afternoon, eyes never ungluing from a panel in *Marvel's Greatest Comics* in which Mr. Fantastic had balled himself into an orb the size of a baseball in order to be shot from a bazooka into the vulnerable mouth of an otherwise impervious fifty-foot-tall robot named Tomazooma, the Living Totem, "Your moms is still gone?"

"Yeah."

"Dang, man. That's fucked up."

Then, sixth grade. Intermediate School 293. As before, Mingus had leapfrogged from the sixth-grade annex building where Dylan now was to the main building, a block away, where the seventh and eighth graders were housed. This was the year of the headlock, the year of the *yoke*, Dylan's heat-flushed cheeks wedged into one or another black kid's elbow, book bag skidding to the gutter, pockets rapidly, easily frisked for lunch money or a bus pass. On Hoyt Street, on Bergen, on Wyckoff if he was stupid enough to walk on Wyckoff. On Dean Street, even, one block from home, before the dead eyes of the brownstones. Adults, teachers, they were remote, blind, indifferent. Dylan, he was a bug on a grid of slate, white boy walking.

"Yoke him, man," they'd say, exhorting. He was the object, the occasion, it was irrelevant what he overheard. "Yoke the white boy. *Do* it, nigger."

He might be yoked low, bent over, hugged to someone's hip then spun on release like a human top, legs buckling, crossing at the ankles. Or from behind, never sure by whom once the headlock popped loose and three or four guys stood around, witnesses with hard eyes, shaking their heads at the sheer dumb luck of being white. It was as routine as laughter. Yoking erupted spontaneously, a joke of fear, a piece of kidding.

He was dismissed from it as from an episode of light street theatre. "Nobody hurt you, man. It ain't for real. You know we was just fooling with you, right?" They'd spring away, leave him tottering, hyperventilating, while they high-fived, more like amazed spectators than perpetrators. If Dylan choked or whined they were perplexed and slightly disappointed at the white boy's hysteria. On those occasions, they'd pick up his books or hat and press them on him, tuck him back together. A ghost of fondness lived in a headlock's shadow. Yoker and yokee had forged a funny compact. You regularly promised your enemies that what you did together had no name.

Dylan leaked saliva, tears. On a cold day a nostril-path of snot. Once, pee. He'd bite his tongue and taste the seepage, the tang of humiliation swallowed back. They made faces, rolled eyes. Dylan was hopeless, stained with shame. They'd try to overlook it.

"Boy bleeds you touch him, dang."

"Nah, man, he all right. Let him alone, man."

"You ain't gonna say nothing, right? 'Cause you know we just messin' around. We wouldn't never *do* nothin' to you, man."

He'd nod, collect himself. Wait to be congratulated for gulping back a clog of tears, for exhibiting silence.

"See? You pretty cool, for a white boy. Get outta here now."

White boy was his name. He'd grown into it, crossed a line, become visible. He shined like free money. The price of the name was whatever was in his pockets at the time, fifty cents or a dollar.

"White boy, lemme talk to you for a minute." Head tipped sideways, too lazy to take hands from pockets to summon him. One black kid, two, three. Eyes rolled, laughing. The whole event a quotation of itself, a little boring.

If he ignored it, tried to keep walking: "Yo, *white boy!* I'm *talking* to you, man."

"What's the matter, you can't *hear*?"

No. Yes.

"You don't like me, man?"

Helpless.

The fact of it: he'd cross the street to have his pockets emptied.

"Just come here for a minute, man, I ain't gonna hurt you. What you gotta be afraid for? *Dang*, man. You think I'm gonna hurt you?"

No. Yes.

The logic was insane, except as a polyrhythm of fear and reassurance, a seduction. "What you afraid of? You a *racist*, man?"

"Who you looking for? Ain't nobody gonna help you, man."

"Nah, man, chill out. This white boy's all right, he's cool. You don't got to fuck with him."

"Fuck he starin' at me for, then? Yo, man, you a racist motherfucker? I might have to fuck up your stupid ass, just for that."

"Nah, man, shut up, he's cool. You cool, right, man? Hey, you got a dollar you could loan me?"

The distillation, the question at the core of the puzzle, asked a million times, a million ways:

"What you lookin' at?"

"*Fuck* you lookin' at, man?"

"Don't look at me, white boy. I'll slap you, motherfucker."

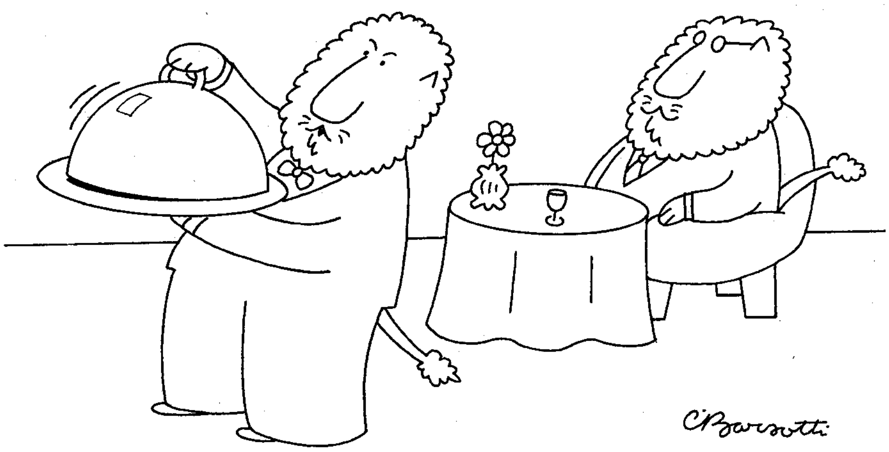
Here was what Robert Woolfolk had prepared him for. The bicycle thief had awarded Dylan the gift of his own shame, his mummy's silence, for use on a daily basis. Each encounter bore Robert's signature tilted logic, interrogations spinning nowhere, ritual assurance that nothing had actually happened. And the guilt of Dylan's whiteness excusing everything, covering it all.

What
the
fuck
am
I
looking
at?

If Dylan ever lifted his eyes from the pavement he might have been casting around for a grownup, or some older kid he knew to bail him out. Mingus Rude, say, not that he was clear he'd want Mingus to see him this way, cowering at the prospect of a yoke, white boy with cheeks hate-red. And he never allowed himself to say what he thought a hundred times: Hey, I'm not racist, my best friend is black! It wasn't halfway sayable. Besides, nobody had ever said who was whose best friend. Mingus Rude likely had a million of them, seventh graders, black, white, who knew. And Dylan could have said *black* aloud about as easily as *Fucking looking at motherfucking YOU, man!*

One afternoon, near the finish of that sixth-grade spring, Mingus Rude was waiting for Dylan at the bottom of his stoop. Mingus wore a military-green jacket though it was too warm for a jacket, and the jacket clanked, full of some metallic something that had been pushed through torn pockets to nestle in the lining. The jacket's back panel bore Mingus's tag, Dose, elaborately surrounded by asterisk-like stars and swooping punctuation. Dylan pushed his schoolbag just inside Mingus's basement door and they slouched their way together down Dean Street.

They crept wordlessly into Brooklyn Heights, away from Dean Street, putting the Gowanus Houses at their backs, skirting I.S. 293 entirely. They were invisible in the throngs on Montague Street, the three-o'clock flood of private-school kids from Packer Institute and Saint Ann's and Brooklyn Friends. The Heights kids clustered around the Burger King and the Baskin-Robbins in giddy



"Behave—this guy's a good tipper."

crowds, boys mixed with girls, all in corduroys and Lacoste shirts, flutes and clarinets in leather cases heaped carelessly with their backpacks at their feet, their senses so bound up in a private cosmos of flirtation that Dylan and Mingus passed through them like an X-ray.

Then a blond girl with an intricate mouthful of braces stepped out of her posse of look-alikes and called them over. Eyes wild with her own daring, she showed a cigarette.

"Got a light?"

Her friends busted up at the self-conscious comedy of it, but Mingus didn't care. He dug in his jacket lining and pulled out a bright-blue lighter, like a Pez container that blurted a curl of fire. How she'd known he'd have it Dylan couldn't fathom. The tone of the scene switched again, the girl leaned in, eyes narrowed ferally now, thrilled and wary, tilted her head, scooped her hair around her ear to protect it from the flame. She turned her back the moment the cigarette was lit and Dylan and Mingus moved on, dismissed.

The Heights Promenade was a rim of park cantilevered over the shipyards, Brooklyn's sulky lip. Old men and women pecked forward like pigeons on cobblestone, or sat frozen with clutched newspapers on benches in the face of Manhattan's tedious spires, the skyline a channel no one watched that played anyway, like famous static. Dylan and Mingus were detectives, following clues. The trail was legible in gushy, streaked fonts on lamppost bases and mail-deposit boxes, fire-alarm poles, garage doors, finger-traced in dust on the panels of trucks.

"Roto I," "Bel I," "Deal," "Buster NSA," "SuperStrut," "FMD."

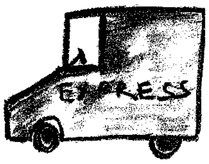
"Non Stop Action," translated Mingus. He was hushed by the knowledge, his eyes unfocussed. Tags and their invisible authors were the next Marvel superheroes, the hidden lore. "Flow Master Dancers."

Roto and Bel and Deal were in DMD Crew, a new outfit from Atlantic Terminals, a housing project across Flatbush. SuperStrut was old school. The style might look funny now, but you wouldn't disrespect it. The syllable "TOY" was written in mockery over certain tags, disrespect for a writer who was a toy.

Mingus fished in his lining for his El Marko, a Magic Marker consisting of a puglike glass bottle stoppered with a fat wick of felt. Purple ink sloshed inside the tiny screw-top bottle, staining the glass in curtains of color. Mingus drew out a safety pin and stuck the felt in a dozen places, until the ink bled so freely it stained the green cuff of his oversized jacket.

"Dose" went up on a lamppost, Mingus's hand moving in studied arcs.

A tag was a reply, a call to those who heard, like a dog's bark understood across fences. A reply in moist purple. The letters dripped and stunk thrillingly. Every time they went up, Mingus hustled Dylan away, the El Marko clanking back in his jacket lining against the blue lighter and whatever else. Their path was a zigzag sentence consisting of a single word, "Dose," written in blank spots found everywhere.



Under oblivious eyes, the invisible autographed the world.

The long path of the Promenade curled at the end in a small abandoned playground, two swings, a slide. Mingus took a minute to tag "Dose" on the heel-dented mercury sheen of the slide, a particularly juicy rendition with a dripping halo.

He offered Dylan the El Marko. The purple-fingerprinted bottle rolled like something ripe in Mingus's stained palm, a plum.

"Go ahead," he said. "Tag up. Hurry."

"How do I know what to write?"

"Don't you got a tag yet? Make one up."

Marvel Comics had it right, the world was all secret names, you only needed to uncover your own.

White Boy?

"Dillinger," Dylan said. He stared, not quite reaching for the El Marko.

"Too long, man. Something like Dill 3, D-Lone."

A Filipino babysitter creaked a stroller into the playground. Mingus slipped the marker into his jacket, tilted his head.

"Let's go."

You could flee a woman who was four feet tall with a baby lashed into a stroller, scramble away giddy and hysterical. It was only real threat that froze you where you stood, your feet like bricks, to dig in your pocket and offer up your bills and change.

Mingus hoisted onto the fence surrounding the playground, swung a leg, dropped. Dylan, trying to follow, doubled himself on the fence. Mingus braced under Dylan's arms while Dylan scrabbled with his foot. They fell together like cartoon cats in a sack on the other side.

"Dang, son, get off me!"

Dylan found his glasses where they'd tumbled in the grass. Mingus brushed at his pants, his jacket, like James Brown checking his suit for imaginary lint. He was grinning, lit up. A shard of leaf in the coils of his hair.

"Get up, son, you're on the ground!" Mingus at his happiest called Dylan "son" in a booming voice, another quotation, half Redd Foxx, half Foghorn Leghorn.

He offered his hand, yanked Dylan to his feet. Dylan wanted to clear the leaf from Mingus's hair but left it alone.

They trudged down a grade to a hidden patch of land, a tilted triangle of desolate ailanthus and weeds, choked in exhaust at the edge of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, cars whirring indifferent below. The patch was littered with cigarette butts, forty-ounce bottles, shreds of tire—an oasis of neglect. Mingus leaned against the wall, and thumbed the blue lighter, held it sideways to the tip of a small, faucetlike chrome pipe, another surprise product of the green jacket's lining. Head tilted, eyes squeezed in concentration, Mingus sipped at smoke, held it in with thin-pressed lips. Fumes leaked from his nose. He nodded his chin at Dylan, finally exhaled.

"You want some weed?"

"Nah." Dylan tried to keep it breezy, an incidental turndown that could have gone either way.

Below, trucks roared past, bearing their own graffiti markings from other parts of the city, alien communication spread by an indifferent carrier, like a virus.

"I took it from my pops. He keeps it in the freezer."

"Does he know?" Dylan asked.

Mingus shook his head. "He got so much, he won't even notice." He flicked the lighter again, the bowl of the pipe flaring orange, crackling faintly. Dylan worked not to tip his fascination.

"You ever smoke weed?"

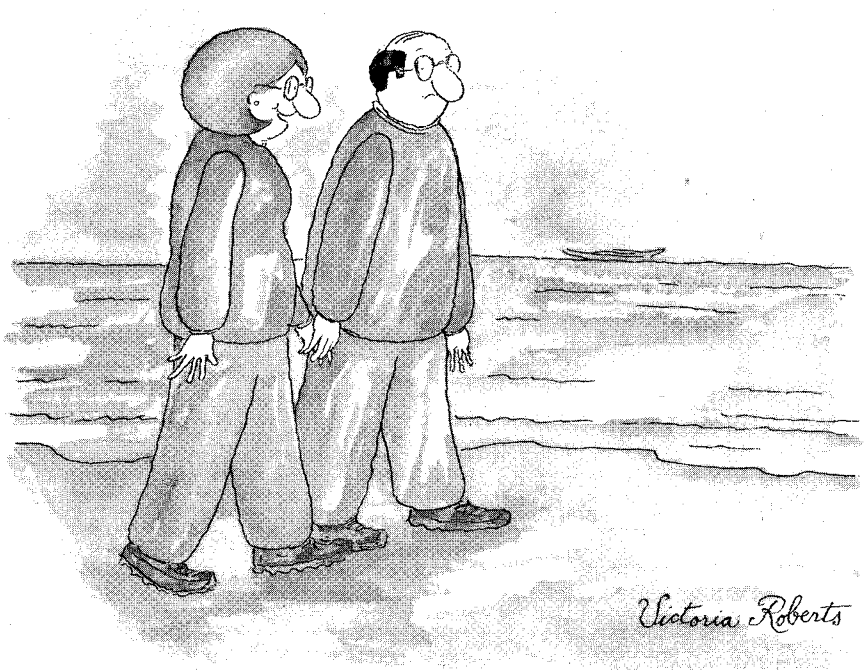
"Sure," Dylan lied.

"It's no big thing."

"It's O.K., I did it before, I just don't want to right now."

"Before?"

"Sure," Dylan said. "My *mom's* a pot-



"Ah, the ecstasy of moving all the right muscle groups."

• •

head." As it came from his mouth Dylan felt he'd betrayed Rachel, played her like a card he didn't mind losing.

"Yeah, well, speaking of which, my moms kicked my father out for smoking drugs," Mingus said. Having chipped in his own disaster, he went mute. Possibly mentioning anyone's moms out loud, even your own, was miscalculation enough to blow an afternoon.

You were never ineligible for a screwup like that—say the unsayable word and watch it foul the sky. Then you were right back where you didn't want to be. Pinned to the grid.

A white boy with no moms, squirming in the glare.

Yoked.

Yo mama.

Mingus made the pipe disappear into his jacket. The two of them clambered back up the grade, scaled the fence easily, and in silence walked home, putting the Promenade behind them. Though Dylan was ready now to be offered the El Marko, ready to uncap the pinned-out, purple-soaked felt and feel it flow under his own hand, to discover his own graffiti name and to plop it dripping on the sides of lampposts beside Mingus's "Dose," they tagged nothing. Mingus's hands remained buried in the pockets of the jacket, fists pushed into the lining to grip the lighter and the pipe and the El Marko so they didn't clank together as they bounced against his thighs. Leaf still in his hair.

The first day of seventh grade Dylan stood on the slate in front of Mingus Rude's stoop, waiting. If Mingus would walk with him up Dean Street to Court, walk through the doors of the school with him, side by side, everything might be different.

Women trudged little kids to kindergarten at the Y or moved alone up Nevins to the subway. A bunch of black girls swept up from the projects to high school. They shared a cigarette for breakfast, rumbled around the corner in a ball of smoke and laughter. It was the first day of school everywhere in the world, possibly.

Only one thing wrong with this picture, as the block cleared, the bus breathed past, a dog barked in a cycle like code: Dylan standing in long pants and with his backpack full of unruined binder pages and dumb pencils. He felt like an apple skinned for inspection, already souring in the sun. Those dogs could tell and probably anybody else, too: he stank of panic.

Dylan should have planned it with Mingus in advance, he saw now.

Up the stoop, he rang the bell.

He rang it again, shifting in his Keds, anxious, time ticking away, the day and the prospect of seventh grade rapidly spoiling with him in the sun.

Then, like an irrational puppet, panicked, he leaned on the doorbell and let it ring in a continuous trill. He was still ringing it when the door opened.

It wasn't Mingus but Barrett Rude, Jr., in a white bathrobe, naked underneath, unhidden to the street, arms braced in the door, looking down. Face clotted with sleep, he blinked in the slanted, scouring light. He lifted his arm to cover his eyes with shade, looking like he wanted to wave the day off as a bad idea, a passing mistake.

"Hell you doing, Little Dylan?"

Dylan took a step backward from the door.

"Don't *never* be ringing my doorbell seven in the morning, man."

"Mingus—"

"You'll see Mingus at the *got-damn* school." Barrett Rude was waking into his anger, his voice like a cloud of hammers. "Get out of here now."

It was entirely possible that one song could destroy your life. Yes, musical doom could fall on a lone human form and crush it like a bug. The song, *that song*, was sent from somewhere else to find you, to pick the scab of your whole existence. The song was your personal shitty fate, manifest as a throb of pop floating out of radios everywhere.

At the very least the song was the soundtrack to your destruction, the *theme*. Your days reduced to a montage cut to its cowbell beat, inexorable doubled bass line and raunch vocal, a sort of chanted sneer, surrounded by groans of pleasure. The stutter and blurt of what—a *tuba*? French horn? Rhythm guitar and trumpet, pitched to mockery. The singer might as well have held a gun to your head. How could it have been allowed to happen, how could it have been allowed on the *radio*? That song ought to be illegal. It wasn't racist—you'll never sort that one out, don't even start—so much as anti-*you*.

Yes they were dancing, and singing / and movin' to the groovin' / and just when it hit me / somebody turned around and shouted—

Every time your sneakers met the street, the end of that summer, somebody was hurling it at your head, *that song*.

September 4, 1976, the week Dylan Ebdus began seventh grade in the main building on Court Street and Butler, Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music" was the top song on the rhythm-and-blues charts. Fourteen days later it topped *Billboard's* pop charts. Your misery's anthem, No. 1 song in the nation.

Sing it through gritted teeth: *WHITE BOY!*

Lay down the boogie and play that funky music till you die.

Seventh grade was where it turned out that when Dylan Ebdus finally joined Mingus Rude in the main building Mingus Rude was never there. It was as if Mingus walked another Dean Street to school, had actually all this time gone to another I.S. 293 entirely. The only evidence he existed was the proliferation of Dose tags on lampposts and mailboxes, Mingus's handiwork spread in a nimbus with the school building at the center. Every few days, it seemed, produced a fresh supply. Dylan would covertly push a forefinger against the metal, wondering if he could measure in the tackiness of the ink the tag's vintage. If his finger stuck slightly Dylan imagined he'd followed Mingus by minutes to the spot, barely missed catching him in the act.

Seventh grade was sixth grade desublimated, uncorked. It was the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy to sixth grade's "The Hobbit," the real story at last, all the ominous foreshadowed stuff flushed from the margins and into view. It wasn't for children, seventh grade. You could read the stress of even entering the building in the postures of the teachers, the security guards. Nobody could relax in such a racial and hormonal disaster area.

Bodies ranged like ugly cartoons, as though someone without talent were scribbling in flesh.

Chinese kids had apparently gotten some warning well in advance, and had thoroughly disappeared. Puerto Rican or Dominican kids seemed to be tiptoeing away from the scene of everything. They decorated themselves differently and spoke more Spanish each passing hour. The scariest fights were between black girls.

There were just four other white kids in the school, three of them girls, with their own girl factors to work out. When Dylan Ebdus first spotted the fourth, Arthur Lomb, it was at a distance, across the schoolyard. It was like noticing the flight and fall of a bird across an expanse of leaf-blurred sky. It occurred at that moment after the bell had rung and the gym teachers who patrolled the yard had returned inside, ahead of the flood of students, and the yard became a lawless zone—that terrible sudden reframing of space which could happen anywhere, even inside the corridors of the school. Nevertheless it was a clumsy mistake for the boy now cringing on the ground to have been caught on the side of the yard so far from the entrance, a mistake Dylan felt he couldn't forgive. He wouldn't have forgiven it in himself.

Arthur Lomb fell to his knees and clutched his chest and keened. His words were briefly audible across the depopulating yard, each syllable riding a sharp insuck of air, "*I!*" Pause. "*Can't!*" Pause. "*Breathe!*"

Arthur Lomb was pretending asthma or some other weakness. It was an identifiable method: preëmptive suffering. Nobody could do much with a kid who was already crying. He had no spirit to crush and it was faintly disgusting, in poor taste. He might even be truly sick, fucked up, in pain, who knew? Your only option was to say, "Dang, white boy, what's your problem? I didn't even touch you." And move on.

Dylan admired the strategy, feeling at once a cool quiver of recognition and a hot bolt of shame. He felt that he was seeing his double, his stand-in. It was at least true that any punishment Arthur Lomb endured was likely otherwise to be Dylan's, or anyway that a gang of black kids couldn't knock Dylan to the pavement or put him in a yoke at the exact moment they were busy doing it to Arthur Lomb.

From that point on Arthur Lomb's reddish hair and hunched shoulders were easy to spot. He dressed in conspicuous striped polo shirts and wore soft brown shoes, and carried an enormous bright-blue backpack, an additional blight. All his schoolbooks must be inside, or maybe a couple of stone tablets. The bag glowed as a target, begged to be jerked downward, to crumple Arthur Lomb to the corridor floor to enact his shortness-of-breath routine. Dylan had seen it done five times already before he and Arthur Lomb ever spoke. Dylan had even heard kids chanting the song at Arthur Lomb as they slapped at his reddened neck or the top of his head while he squirmed on the floor. Play that *fucking* music, white boy! Stretching the last two words to a groaning, derisive, Bugs Bunnyesque *whyyyyyyyyboy!*

It was in the library that they finally spoke. Dylan and Arthur Lomb's two homerooms had been deposited there together for a period, the school librarian covering some unexplained absence of teachers. Below a poster advertising "A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich," a book the library didn't actually offer, Dylan placed himself against a wall and flipped open issue No. 2 of the Marvel Comics adaptation of "Logan's Run." As the period ticked away glacially, Arthur Lomb buzzed him twice, squinting to see the title of the comic, then pursing his lips in false concentration as he mimed browsing the half-empty shelves nearby, before stepping close enough for Dylan to hear him speak in an angry, clenched whisper.

"That guy George Perez can't draw Farrah Fawcett to save his life."

It was a startling allusion to several bodies of knowledge simultaneously. Dylan could only glare, his curiosity mingled with the certainty that he and Arthur Lomb were more objectionable, more unpardonable, together than apart. Up close, Arthur Lomb had a blinky agitated quality to his features which made Dylan want to knock him down himself. His face seemed to reach for something, his features like a grasping hand. Dylan wondered if there might be a pair of glasses tucked in the background somewhere, perhaps in a side pocket of the monumental blue backpack.

"Seen it?"

"What?"

" 'Logan's Run.' "

Fuck you looking at? Dylan wanted to shriek at Arthur Lomb, before it was too late, before he succumbed to his loneliness and allowed himself to meet Arthur, the other white boy.

"Not yet," Dylan said instead.

"Farrah Fawcett is a *fox*."

Dylan didn't answer.

"Don't feel bad. I bought ten copies of *Logan's Run #1*." Arthur Lomb spoke in a hurried whisper, showing some awareness of his surroundings, but compelled to spill what he had, to force Dylan to know him. "You *have* to buy No. 1s, it's an investment. I've got ten of *Eternals*, ten of *2001*, ten of *Omega*, ten of *Kobra*. And all those comics stink. No. 1's a No. 1, doesn't matter. You know *Fantastic Four #1* goes for four hundred dollars? Kobra might be an all-time record for the stupidest character ever. Doesn't matter. Put it in plastic and put it on the shelf, that's what I say. You use plastic, don't you?"

"Of course," Dylan said resentfully.

He understood every word Arthur Lomb said. Worse, he felt his sensibility colonized by Arthur's, his future interests coöpted.

The writing was on the wall. If Mingus didn't resurface, Dylan and Arthur were doomed to friendship.

A day later, Mingus did resurface. At three o'clock, the hour when the doors were thrown open and the school exploded onto the October-bright pavement, when Court Street shopkeepers stood arms-crossed in doorways, their jaws chewing gum or nothing at all, just chewing under narrowed eyes. Dylan tried to be lost in the flow of anonymous faces as he left the building, hoping to be carried a distance down Court Street disguised in a clot of anybodies before exposing himself as a solitary white boy. Today he stopped. Mingus sat cross-legged on the hump of a mailbox on the corner of Court and Butler, regarding the manic outflow of kids with a Buddha's calm, as though from an even greater height than the mailbox, another planet maybe. Dylan understood at once that not only hadn't Mingus been inside the school today, he hadn't crossed its doors since summer, since the start of his eighth-grade year.

"Yo, Dill-Man!" said Mingus, laughing. "I was looking for you, man. Where you been?"

Mingus unfolded his legs and slid off the mailbox, pulled Dylan sideways out of the crowd, like there was never a question they left school together, like they'd done it every day for three weeks. They crossed into Cobble Hill, Dylan hitching his backpack high on his shoulders and trotting to keep up. "I haven't seen you—" Dylan began.

" 'Whenever you call me, I'll be there,' " Mingus sang, " 'Whenever you need me, I'll be there—I been a-round!' Here." He crumpled a couple of dollars into Dylan's hands and nodded at the Arab newsstand on the corner of Clinton. "Get me a pack of Kools, Super-D." He tipped his head again. "I'll be over here."

"I can't buy cigarettes."

"Say it's for your mom, he'll sell it to you, don't worry. Better let me hold your backpack."

Dylan tried not to turn his head at the rack of comics as he stepped into the narrow, darkened space of the newsstand.

"Uh, pack of Kools. It's for my mother."

The operation unfolded precisely as scripted. The guy raised an eyebrow at the word "mother," then slid the Kools across the linoleum counter with nothing besides a grunt.

Mingus stashed both cigarettes and change in his jacket-of-mystery, then led Dylan back toward the small park on Amity Street.

"Dill-Man, D-Lone, Dillinger," Mingus chanted. "Diggity Dog, Deputy Dog, *Dillimatic*."

"I haven't seen you anywhere," Dylan said, unable to check the plaint in his voice.

"You all right, man?" Mingus asked. "Everything cool with you?"

Dylan knew precisely what *everything* Mingus meant—all of seventh grade, whatever went on or didn't inside the building that was apparently no longer Mingus's problem.

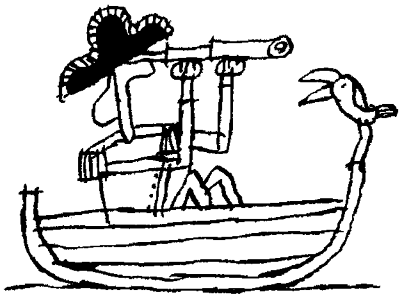
"Everything cool?" Mingus demanded.

Mingus Rude was unreachable, blurred, maybe high, Dylan saw now. There wasn't going to be any communing with his core, that vivid happy sadness which called out to Dylan's own.

Dylan shrugged, said, "Sure."

"That's all I want to know, man. You know you're my main man, Dillinger. D-Train."

As they slipped into the park, Mingus exaggerated his ordinary lope, raised a hand in dreamy salute. Arrayed at the concrete chessboard tables were three black teen-agers in assorted slung poses. One more chaotically slung than the others, a signature geometry of limbs that caused Dylan's heart to madly lurch. Nevertheless he strolled beside Mingus into the thick of it, accepted whatever was meant to unfold in the park from within his own sleepwalker's daze, which, perfected at the new school, covered even the appearance here of Robert Woolfolk, Bike Stealer. Yoker Prime.



"Yo," said Mingus Rude, lazily slapping at hands, humming swallowed syllables that might be names.

"What's goin' on, Gus?" said Woolfolk. When he saw Dylan he flinched with his whole face, his sour-lemon features hiding nothing, yet didn't alter the arrangement of his limbs an inch.

The park was full of little white kids with bowl haircuts, maybe second or third graders from Packer or Saint Ann's. They ran and screamed past the chessboard tables, dressed in Garanimals, arms loaded with plastic toys, G.I. Joes, water pistols, Wiffle balls. They might as well have been animated Disney bluebirds, twittering harmlessly around the head of the Wicked Witch as she coated an apple with poison.

"Shit," Robert Woolfolk said, and now he smiled. "You know this dude, G?"

"This my man *D-Lone*," Mingus said. "He's cool. We go back, he's my boy from around the block."

Robert looked at Dylan a long while before he spoke.

"I know your boy," he said. "I seen him from before you were even around, G." He flicked his eyes at Dylan. "What up, Dylan man? Don't say you don't remember me, because I know you do."

"Sure," Dylan said.

"Oh, yeah?" Mingus said, carefully blasé. "So you down, right? You cool with my man Dylan."

Robert Woolfolk laughed. "What you need me to say, man? You can hang with your white boy, don't mean shit to me."

At that, the moment was shattered in hilarity. The two other black teen-agers snorted, slapped each other five for the words "white boy," as ever a transport to hear said aloud. "Ho, *snap*," one said, shaking his head in wonderment as if he'd just seen a good stunt in a movie, a car flipped over or a body crumpled in a hail of blood-spurting bullet *thwips*.

Dylan stood frozen in his stupid backpack and unpersuasive Keds in the innocent afternoon, his arms numb, blinking his eyes at Mingus.

"We going down to bomb some trains or we sit here all day talking 'bout this and that?" Woolfolk said.

"Let's go," Mingus said softly.

"You bringing your homeboy here?"

Suddenly a woman stepped into the thick of them. Out of nowhere she made herself present. It was as though she'd ruptured a force field Dylan hadn't thought was permeable, one where their talk, no matter how many times the word "fuck" was included, was sealed in a glaze of distant car horns and bird tweets and the younger kids' sweet yells.

The woman was a mom, surely, one of the running kids had to be hers. She was maybe twenty-five or thirty, with blond hair, matching bluejean jacket and bell-bottoms, and granny glasses. Dylan could imagine her at one of his mother's parties, waving a joint around, making some passionate digression about Altman or Szechuan, aggravating men accustomed to holding the floor. There were probably hundreds like her, false Rachels.

"You O.K., kid?"

She spoke to Dylan alone, there was no mistaking. The rest of them, Mingus included, were one thing in her eyes, Dylan another. Of all times, it would have to be now. Dylan had wished what felt like a million times for an adult to step up, for a teacher or a friend of his father's to turn a corner on Dean Street and collide with one of his unnameable disasters, to break it open with a simple question like "You O.K., kid?" But not now. This woman sealed his status as *white boy* forever, precisely when Mingus had been working to change it.

"Hey, kid? Something wrong?"

Dylan had turned to her, helpless, gaping. There was no way to tell her how right and wrong she was at once, no way to make her evaporate. All the worse that she was beautiful, gleaming like the cover of one of Rachel's *Ms.* magazines, which were still stacked up in the living room for Dylan's eventual guilty perusal of illustrated features on bralessness. She shouldn't have popped out of the other world, the Cobble Hill world of private-school kids, it was a misunderstanding.

"They're my friends," Dylan said feebly. As it was out of his mouth it occurred to him he'd failed another test, another where the correct answer was "Fuck you lookin' at?" That phrase, robustly applied, might have actually transported them all back in time to a moment before Robert Woolfolk had said the words "white boy." Dylan might have then been invited to trail the others to a transit yard or wherever else they were going in order to *bomb some trains*, a richly terrifying prospect. Dylan longed to bomb some trains as fiercely as if he'd been hearing that phrase for years instead of just once, moments ago.

No one else piped up to say, "Lady, mind your own fuckin' business," and Dylan saw that Robert Woolfolk and his two companions, Robert's laugh track, were missing. Gone. Dylan had slipped a gear in staring perplexedly at the blond woman, lost a moment in dreaming, and in that moment Robert Woolfolk had shunted away, out of the blithe park that seemed intended to contain anything but him. As though making a silent confession of whatever it was the woman suspected was going on. Only Mingus remained, and he stood apart from the table where the others had sat, and from Dylan.

"Do you want me to walk you home?" the woman asked. "Where do you live?"

"Yo, Dylan man, I'll check you later," Mingus said. He wasn't fearful, only uninterested in contending with the blond woman and anything she thought she knew. "Be cool," Mingus said. He held out his hand, waiting for Dylan to tap it with his fingertips. "I'll check you on the block, D."

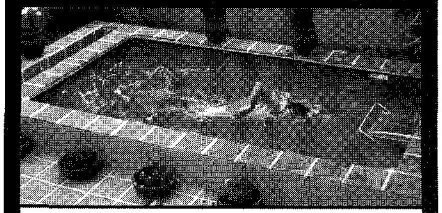
With that, Mingus hunched his arms around his jacket pockets as though leaning into a strong wind and ambled into the sun-blobbed trees in the far corner of the park, toward the B.Q.E., the shipyards, wherever he was going where Dylan wasn't going to be swept along now.

That's my best friend, Dylan wanted to tell the blond woman, who the longer he didn't reply to her offer was more and more squinting at Dylan like she might have miscalculated, like he might be a thing spoiled by the company she'd found him in, a misfit, not a kid worth her rescue in the first place.

And that's what he wanted to be to her: spoiled, stained with blackness.

Racist bitch.

Where do I live? In his fantasy Dylan replied, I live in the housing projects on Wyckoff Street, that's where. The Gowanus Houses. You know the ones, they're always on fire. If you want to walk me home, lady, let's go. ♦



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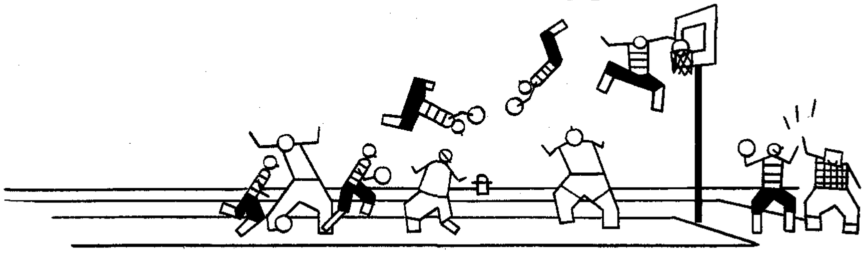

IN FASHION

BROAD STRIPES, BRIGHT STARS

The Spring-Summer men's fashion shows in Milan and Paris.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

Are you really interested in what men wear? Do you rifle hungrily through your Sunday paper to extract the semi-annual color supplement on men's style? Does an outfit in the window of Bergdorf's men's store ever stop you in your tracks like the flashback from a dream? Does Bergdorf's men's store have windows? I don't recall. Most wondrous clothes that make men ineffably poetic figures are on the walls of the Met or in news footage from Afghanistan. Since the nineteenth century, when the Western ruling class adopted the uniform of a dark, tailored suit worn with a shirt and tie, men's fashion (not to put too fine a point on so obvious a truth) has been militantly prosaic. The rise of the merchant prince coincided with the decline of fashion as a theatre in which men wore romantic costumes. It coincided, in fact, with the decline of culturally sanctioned male vanity, flamboyance, and insouciance. The courtier or the tribesman is freer than the self-made man in one respect: a modern identity is less stable, and demands more psychic effort to maintain, than a traditional role. The ceaseless effort to prove one's worth diverts ambition from more luxuriant forms of self-expression.

It is, in short, considerably more rewarding, creatively and financially, for most of the designers who showed their Spring-Summer 2004 menswear collections last month in Milan and Paris to work for the avid and knowing clients who best appreciate their gifts—women. Men's fashion represents a fraction of their business, and one that is, for the most part, in steep decline. A general sense of crisis may help to explain the lassitude of buyers and critics, though perhaps it was partly the side effect of a spectacular heat wave that broke records for June.

In Milan, an African sirocco stirred migraines, excited great swarms of mosquitoes, and, like a cosmic hair dryer, blew curls of torrid yellow dust through graffiti-scarred streets and drought-scorched piazzas. The sun faded the rainbow "*Pace*" banners that were hung to protest the war in Iraq. Housewives draped tarps or bedsheets over their shutters, which gave the city's working-class districts the air of a bedraggled encampment. Its industrial outskirts, where a number of shows were held in hangars or sheds, became a giant kiln of cinder block and corrugated tin. The power failed; residents were warned to avoid taking elevators; and it was even a little dangerous to wear stilettos: they sank half an inch into the melting tar, impaling one's legs to the spot while one's torso pitched forward, head first, like a stone launched from a slingshot. In such a climate, a fur coat from the fall collection already in the window of Valentino's men's boutique on the Via Montenapoleone was as tempting as a hair shirt, and an alligator jacket with a price tag of twenty thousand euros might have found a buyer had it come with a muddy river in which to wallow.

Many shows played to escape fantasies—of Alpine lakes, luffing mainsails, crashing surf, island breezes, piney woods, and Riviera sunsets—that tortured the parched souls condemned to review them under sweat-lodge conditions. Yet, even though the weather made news, the collections will probably be remembered as the season of the cowboy. The New York *Times* ran Cathy Horyn's report from Paris as a front-page story with a picture from Tom Ford's show for Gucci. The model wore a bone-white Stetson that matched his broad-shouldered jacket. His jeans were belted with a silver buckle, and he carried a pair of riding gloves. "MACHO AMERICA STORMS EUROPE'S RUNWAYS," the headline read, and the story suggested that Ford—a native Texan who lives in Paris and who, last winter, publicly criticized America's bellicose intentions—was now fawning on the victors and eager to exploit the popularity of the rugged he-man in the White House.

Among the other labels that seasoned an eclectic summer salad with a dollop of ranch dressing (cowboy hats, pointy boots, snap-closed shirts with scalloped yokes) were Nicole Farhi, Calvin Klein, Roberto Cavalli, John Varvatos, Fendi, and Miu Miu (whose languid and urbane collection, in the shades of a tea table—chamomile, double cream, bone china, and brown sugar—revisited Fort Worth by way of Brideshead). I was not persuaded, however, that the look in whole or in part was intended as an apotheosis of the President: warhorse as clotheshorse. It seemed, rather, that with consumers resistant to spending their severance pay on anything but a conservative, two-button suit for a job interview, and stores drastically reducing the space they allot to masculine fashion, a different hegemon was being summoned, from on high, to come in shooting. He happens to be a trim, monogamous, silver-haired, ranch-owning, Stetson-wearing, horse-riding, sports-loving, flag-waving multimillionaire of undisputed global dominance who has built his career on the dubiously legitimate yet irresistibly glamorous marriage of Old Wasp privilege and frontier swagger—but his name isn't George Bush, it's Ralph Lauren.

In retrospect, the cowboy brouhaha was like the weather: something ephemeral to deplore. The Stetsons were as integral to the clothes on display as a paper party hat is to a tuxedo on New Year's Eve. And the blunt certainty of the *Times* headline, with its faintly sensational suggestion of a new Yankee invasion (a reprisal raid by commandos from the David Barton Gym on the decadent wimps who opposed our war of liberation), also belied the rather anarchic diversity of the clothes that came down the runway. Valentino channelled the wolfish glamour of old Riviera playboys like Gunther Sachs. Ford's collection for YSL was saturated with hot, hedonistic color. Paul Smith revived Op Art squiggles and cabana stripes, while Dolce & Gabbana's prints were psychedelic. (They also got more of a kick from the sartorial theatrics of the soccer star David Beckham than did his former coach at Manchester United. Humble origins, a celebrity marriage, an enviable fortune, athletic prowess, and vast reserves of laddish credibility apparently entitle one to get away with wearing pink, ruffles, and barrettes.)

The Austrian designer Carol Christian Poell sent his models drifting down a canal.

Perhaps it was symbolic of shrinking profits that the seventies, a decade of recession, inspired so many skinny ties and cigarillo suits—such as those at Prada, Dior, Vuitton, and Gigli—cut to flatter the avian figure of a male waif like Adrien Brody. Trousers were shrunken, too. They grazed the anklebone, as if an unemployed futures trader too distracted by the help-wanted ads to read the care instructions on his pants had thrown them into a dryer at the laundromat. That new length, which leaves a gap between instep and cuff, is a little shocking. The flash of an ankle used to represent the chasm between a sophisticate and a rube. It flagged the provincial American as surely as a taste for acrylic greens, golf-tournament pastels, and clashing plaids—three other trends of an anxious season in which designers, like the strapped revenue collectors they are, declared an amnesty for, and even embraced, the faux pas of the average guy.

Some menswear designers are discreetly resourceful in challenging the dronish taste of their customers. Naoki Takizawa's virile yet dreamy collection of rain gear, bowling shirts, and cargo pants for Issey Miyake seethed with the colors and creatures of the jungle floor, in the shape of cutouts and talismanic appliqués. At Jens, "normal people"—dancers and acrobats—modelled lithe, unpretentious warmup clothes in doodle prints. Neil Barrett showed a collection in washed leather, silk twill, and hemp that combined ruggedness with finesse. Atavistic references were encoded into the conceptually elegant, "ecological" sportswear of Hussein Chalayan, whose collection celebrated the "divided history," as a publicist put it, of his native Cyprus. (A zippered pouch at the back of a cotton windbreaker was designed for "stowing small game," and the loops on the shoulders of a T-shirt for "carrying a lance.") He played the laconic modernity of his sludge-colored clothes against the quaint charm of a "history" cloth that enlivened a collar or a lining. The pictures told a boy's adventure tale about Neolithic archers disporting in a palm forest at the edge of a modern city, where medieval knights jousted by a swimming pool and a galleon rode at anchor on the blue waves that lapped its shore while a plane buzzed an ancient minaret. It was an Eden without Eve, though each piece carried a label with the first name of a woman—the worker who sewed it.

A few purists, for better or worse, refuse to indulge the mass market with timid, crass, or banal clothes. Antonio Marras, a young Sardinian who has been called "the Galliano of menswear," experimented with dandyish Proustian jackets worn over pajama-like dhotis in striped jersey. Helmut Lang showed knitted tanks that looked half-eaten by some exotic pest. They were scooped out in asymmetric, demilunar bites that revealed a navel or a nipple. Low-cut jeans, some in Mylar-colored leather, were gaffed with ribbons or swagged vertically with a column of pockets that resembled a Roman shade. Junya Watanabe used cotton cartridge belts as accessories to an ironic collection of Boer-style jodhpurs, khakis, safari jackets, orderlies' coats, middy blouses, and other martial gear demilitarized with sweetly flocked stripes and florals. It was easy to infer a timely protest from these gentle uniforms, though the Japanese hardly need Iraq as a pretext for indignation at tactics of shock and awe.

No one translates angst into fashion with more stylish intensity than Hedi Slimane. His beautifully cut suits are beloved by the lean and hungry of both sexes. The moody spectacle he staged at Dior featured an explosive laser show with a soundtrack of electro-Euro lounge music (which is the noise that the hip magazine *Wallpaper* might emit if it were a radio). But the lighting was so dim and the models in such a hurry—perhaps for dinner, since they looked as though they had been holed up in a bunker without food or shampoo—that I caught only a fleeting glimpse of the clothes as they disappeared behind a bank of mirrors: body-hugging leather pants crumpled at the ankle, slashed nylon camisoles, and hooded jackets worn over naked torsos entangled in sequinned tentacles. Could they have been symbolic of the cables that fetter captive minds to the Matrix?

One never knows what form of radical protest against bourgeois complacence Raf Simons's interesting work will take. But this season the young Belgian focussed his energy on repairing the broken circle of our cosmic awareness with the help of nature, crystals, and Hermann Hesse. His former bleakness has given way to a "different state of consciousness," according to the program. I suppose he figured, not unreasonably, that if he could enlighten the fashion crowd, no feat of conversion was beyond his powers. To that end, he lured us to a buggy grove in the botanical gardens at Vincennes, where his barefoot models, all tender as the grass, stood soulfully among the trees, dressed mostly in flaccid whites, though a stiffly padded coat, suitable for a Druidic rite, was hand-embroidered with sacred symbols and sayings from "Siddhartha": "There is no reality except that which is contained within us." Would that it were so.

An unreconstructed old sinner like me is sometimes grateful for Donatella Versace. At least she isn't renouncing any of the vices that are her virtue. She still smokes. Her skin is the color of Russian amber. It is rumored that she buys the corn-silk tresses of Swedish virgins for her hair extensions. Her steamy show, held in a tent and copiously perfumed with incense, had a Moroccan theme, and the clothes should appeal to dens of sharp-dressing thieves wherever they lie low rubbing lamps, though especially, perhaps, in Hollywood, South Beach, and New Jersey. In addition to tunic-length djellabahs with plunging necklines embellished with gold embroidery, there were some charmingly cocky sharkskin suits. A talent agent (or a garbage contractor) with a sense of humor, if he exists, might pair one with the T-shirt that read: "Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?"

Armani's show, the last event in Milan, quite sensibly, and with exemplary dignity, I thought, snubbed the New World Order, the Middle East, the Old West, the Left Coast, Eastern philosophy, and the various unpleasantries of recent history. His collection paid homage to the Naples of an operetta or a vintage postcard. While his program included a fogyish diatribe against cargo pants (why preach to the converted?), a défilé of boldly striped, fluidly cut, nostalgically patrician leisure wear pared to its essence—blue water and white heat—reasserted his virtuosity.

By the time I got to Paris, the heat had subsided. I did some laundry in my hotel room, went to a few shoe stores on the Rue du Cherche-Midi, mentally converted euros to dollars and didn't buy anything, drank a coffee at the Flore, considered bumming a cigarette from a chic woman in white linen at the next table, dismissed the notion, remembered I had no opaque white underpants to wear under my own white linen suit, looked for a pair up and down the Rue de Rennes, couldn't find any—there is no such thing, in Paris, as opaque white underpants, which is a reason to love Paris—went to a bookshop on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, bought a novel, had another coffee at the Café des Beaux-Arts and considered bumming a cigarette from the art student at the next table who was wearing a cowboy shirt and discussing American imperialism with a girlfriend in adorable bangs and clashing plaids, angrily chided myself, ordered a ham sandwich, and read my newspapers. In one of them I found an interesting story. Recent studies of the Y chromosome suggest a bittersweet truth that most women manage to discover without a microscope: that the human male, however endearing or superior an individual specimen may be, is one of evolution's flawed experiments. The Y chromosome determines the gender of the fetus, and it must isolate itself from the exchange of traits with the X chromosome in the act of reproduction, for if it didn't all infants would be male, and the shoe shops on the Rue du Cherche-Midi out of business. Over tens of millennia, the gallant self-effacement of the Y chromosome has drastically reduced its endowment of genes—from a thousand to fewer than eighty—whereas its robust female counterpart enjoys a double helix as lavishly bejewelled, so to speak, as a queen's parure.

The most thoughtful collections explored a futuristic premise: the exchange of traits between X and Y genes. An evolved couple the same size might share the ravishing white canvas duffle coat with rope toggles at Comme des Garçons, or one of the witty jackets lined with cartoon drawings by Alexander Stadler. At Costume National and Prada, tops with scooped necklines redefined décolletage for men, which has hitherto entailed an unbuttoned disco shirt baring a hairy chest festooned with chains. Prada's menswear seems of the moment precisely because its epicene sensuality is so blasé, and because it reflects the casual attitude of sophisticated young people who don't think they are cross-dressing when they wear the same clothes, and who don't consider themselves rebels or androgynes for doing so. The great Gaultier, on the other hand, introduced a line of makeup (though I

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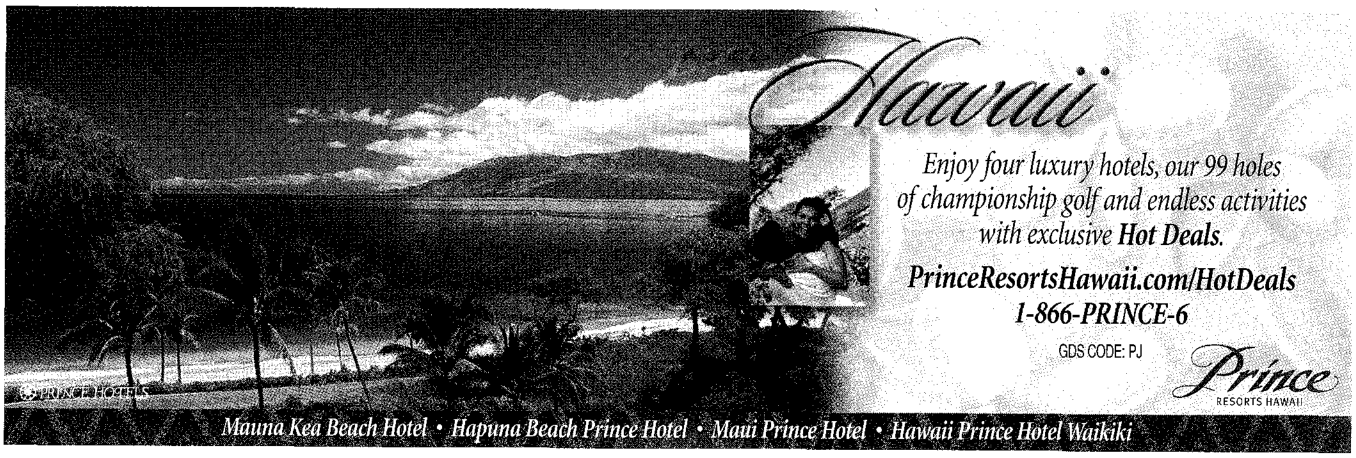

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Mauna Kea Beach Hotel • Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel • Maui Prince Hotel • Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki doubt the men for whom it is intended are shy about sidling up to the Shu Uemura counter at Barneys) and showed a collection that included a peach leather bathrobe, sheer baseball jackets in polka-dot mesh, and ankle-length wrapped dresses that resembled barbecue aprons. His models teetered down the runway in high-heeled boots. At the end of the show, he threw a powder puff at photographers. It wasn't a failure of creative nerve—if anything, Gaultier has too much—that made the show seem anachronistic. It was the campiness of the provocation.

"I detest the ultra-feminine or the ultra-masculine," Jil Sander told me in Milan. Sander was presenting her first collection (for either sex) in three years. She reconciled a few months ago with Patrizio Bertelli, the chief executive of Prada, which bought her company and then forced her to retire from it. "But I had become a bit of a robot, so the time-out was healthy," she said. There has always been a cerebral chill to Sander's precision, but that is its forte. "You just can't speak to everybody," as she puts it. A pleasant if unwilling sabbatical hasn't relaxed her discipline, though a new lightness showed in softly structured jackets; low-waisted trousers in crisp cotton; a Bohemian palette of chrome yellow and poppy red; and playful knits with trompe-l'oeil stretch marks at the seam. I suspect a lot of women will be wearing them.

I'm not sure who will be wearing the long, priestly black skirts and strict jackets with corset lacing that Yohji Yamamoto sent forth at a Parisian lycée (perhaps an advanced human male whose desires resist conformity to any doctrinaire assignment of sexual roles). The distinguished older men, including the great Malian actor Sotigui Kouyate, who modelled the skirts with the authority of grizzled sages and shamans reminded a jaded audience that the soul of beauty is self-possession.

Last spring, I stopped by a suite at the Carlyle where the young Savile Row tailor Richard Anderson was taking orders for his bespoke clothes. He joined the firm of Huntsman as a teenage apprentice, left two years ago to open his own shop, and has spent most of his life dressing gentlemen who appreciate, and can afford, the obsessive perfection of masculine couture. A half-finished, double-breasted blazer hung from a doorjamb. From a distance, it looked as though a column of tiny red ants was marching across the lapel. The ants were stitches, perfectly uniform yet mysteriously alive, as only the finest handwork can be. The fabric, he explained, is a blend of Andean guanaco, pashmina, and yearling cashmere. It felt to the hand as foie gras does to the tongue: exorbitantly rich, ineffably silky, and melting.

The bespoke tradition is an esoteric cult, and the tailors of Anderson's calibre who practice it resemble the Spanish or French curés who, for a tiny congregation of devotees, still say the Latin Mass. But two avant-garde designers—a Belgian who works in Paris and an Austrian in Milan—revere the ideal of artisanal tailoring without subscribing to the dogma of impeccability. The Belgian is Martin Margiela. He is partly a folklorist, salvaging the stories that old clothes have to tell, and partly a mad botanist who scavenges for vintage pieces, rips them apart, then splices their cuttings into a radically strange though pleasing new garment, like a vest with a fly closing made from an inverted trouser top. These unsettling hybrids have their own formal integrity—they aren't merely clever sleights of hand. In fashion as in science, mutation, rather than invention, seems to define modernity.

The Austrian, Carol Christian Poell, is an emaciated man of thirty-six with the stark features and eerie radiance of an El Greco. He studied tailoring in Vienna, where his parents are in the garment business, then learned about textile fabrication in Italy—not, he told me, to lay the technical groundwork for a commercial career in fashion but because he wanted the skills necessary to transcend one. Working entirely by hand, he and a small company of artisans make their limited collections (he can't afford to show them every year) in a loft whose size and openness are unusual for Milan—the backdrops for La Scala were once painted on its floor. The collective has lately been experimenting with new materials: crocheted rubber; a pigskin with the strength and lightness "of a good garbage bag"; and a special gaffer's tape they use instead of thread or ribbon both to seam and to embellish garments.

The invitation to Poell's show was a salmon-colored factory time card stamped with an hour—seven in the evening—and an address that puzzled my driver: "Alzaia Naviglio Grande Under Bridge Viale Cassala." The Naviglio Grande is the largest of the natural canals that flow through and beneath the industrial neighborhood where Poell has his studio, and which is the oldest part of the city. By the time we found the spot, the sun looked like a melon. A youthful crowd had assembled along the iron railing that protects the steep embankment. There was no evidence of a runway. There were no assistants in black, no security personnel talking into headsets, no publicist with a seating chart—indeed, no seating. The water, which was pale green and surprisingly clear, though flecked with wisps of straw, reflected a skyful of Tintoretto clouds. "*Dov'è la sfilata*?" people were asking—where's the show?

Then, to universal amazement, we beheld—drifting lazily down the canal—two red boots, a white shirt, a pair of dark trousers. They were followed by a boy dressed in a thick vest of what looked like russet-colored steel wool. He lay supine and motionless, his limbs outstretched, his perfectly calm face framed by the swirling mass of his hair. There were sixteen of his fellow-volunteers to come. Though the clothes were soggy and a little blurred, one read them—as the current turned the page—like the hand-colored images in some mildewed yet marvellous old book. Poell's idea was so poetic that the magical buoyancy of bodies and clothes (kept from sinking by an invisible flotation device) leapt the banks and infected the audience with a fit of joy. It didn't matter, I thought, what the collection looked like on a hanger or in a shop, because the show had performed a feat that is rare enough in theatre or art and practically unheard of in fashion. It surprised a group of people with an emotion they hadn't been expecting to feel. That is how a child experiences a sensual revelation, and how it is transformed into a memory of being happy. "Everybody follows fashion," Poell told me later. "But change goes against the stream." ◆

BOOKS

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLES

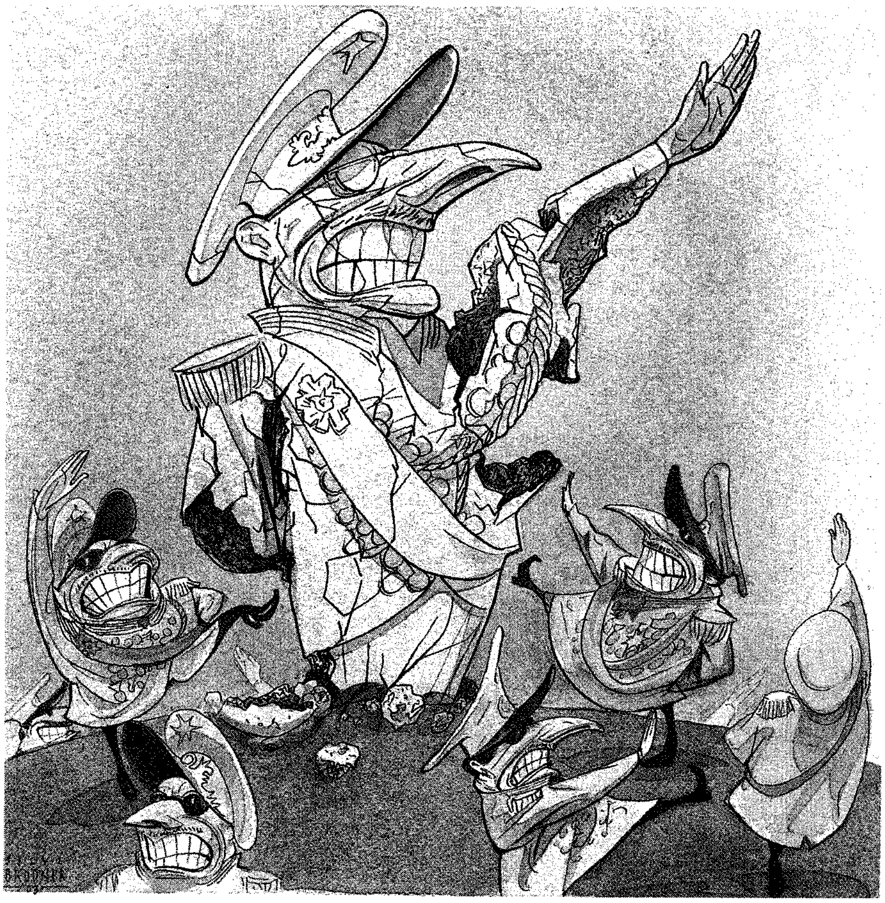
Can you force people to love freedom?

BY LOUIS MENAND

Few puzzles in political philosophy are more daunting than the Problem of the Loyal Henchmen. The Problem of the Loyal Henchmen is a subset of the more familiar Problem of Authority. Why does authority command obedience? A man who tells you to pick your gum wrapper up off the sidewalk is generally ignored; a man in a uniform who makes the same request, even if it's the uniform of a bus driver, is instinctively obeyed. People wearing white lab coats and carrying clipboards, with no other evidence of expertise, have succeeded in persuading subjects in psychology experiments to act in the belief that they are torturing other human beings. In these cases, people can persuade themselves that the authorities they obey are benign—that picking up litter and torturing other human beings in a laboratory are in the interests of civic order and scientific progress. The Problem of the Loyal Henchmen arises when people willingly obey authorities everyone knows to be evil. Why, after the villain has fled in his private submarine, and while the high-tech palace crashes and burns, does the last unincinerated member of the villain's private militia risk his life to take a shot at James Bond? Loyalty to Blofeld? Loyalty to the principles of Blofeldism? What could that mean?

Some distinctions are helpful. First, there are dictators and there are dictators. Political science has distinguished two types, totalitarian and authoritarian ("t. & a.," in foreign-policy shorthand). The definitions were established in 1956 by a Harvard professor, Carl Friedrich, and his co-writer, a recent Harvard Ph.D., Zbigniew Brzezinski; their book, "Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy," was for many years the authority on authoritarianism. Friedrich and Brzezinski identified six criteria that a regime must meet in order to qualify as "totalitarian": an official, chiliastic ideology; a single political party; a centrally directed economy; party control of mass communications; party control of the military; and a secret police. Authoritarian dictatorships are bad, but totalitarianism is the more dangerous phenomenon. Friedrich and Brzezinski's classifications lost favor in the nineteen-sixties, when they began to seem a hypocritical way of distinguishing between dictatorial regimes (generally right wing) that were friendly to American interests and dictatorial regimes (generally left wing) opposed to those interests. The terms were revived, to much attention, in 1979, in an essay in *Commentary* by Jeane Kirkpatrick, who went on to become Ronald Reagan's first Ambassador to the United Nations.

No doubt the American government operates with a double standard when dealing with autocratic regimes, tolerating Saudi abuses of human rights while condemning Cuban abuses, for example. But Friedrich and Brzezinski's distinction was not meant to be a distinction simply between degrees of oppressiveness. They considered authoritarian and totalitarian states to be different types of regimes—to be, in some sense, antithetical. As Friedrich put it in an early article, "Totalitarianism is precisely the opposite of authoritarianism. . . . In a totalitarian society true authority is altogether destroyed." He meant that a key feature of totalitarian societies is the absence of any reliable legal or political structure. Totalitarian rule is experienced as arbitrary rule: the citizen never knows when the knock on the door may come. Another name for this is "terror."



The dictator does not know whether his henchmen obey out of fear or out of conviction.

STEVE BRODNER

One writer who identified terror as the essence of totalitarianism was Hannah Arendt. Arendt started writing "The Origins of Totalitarianism" in 1945, the year Nazi Germany was defeated. The book was published in 1951, at the time

"Leave some shells for less fortunate children."

• •

of the Korean War, and it immediately became a staple of Cold War thinking. Friedrich and Brzezinski were political scientists; Arendt was a philosopher. She was interested in the politics of totalitarianism, but she was also interested in the metaphysics, in totalitarianism as a mode of being in the world. Terror, she argued, may be *experienced* as arbitrary, but it is not arbitrary and it is not lawless. Every despot exercises power arbitrarily; all dictators are outside the law. The distinctive feature of totalitarian societies is that everyone, including (in theory, anyway) the dictator, can be sacrificed in the name of a superhuman law, a law of nature or a law of history. "Totalitarianism strives not toward despotic rule over men but toward a system in which men are superfluous," she said. In Nazism, everyone is subordinate to the race war; in Bolshevism, to the class struggle. Man-made laws and political institutions are temporary shelters for vested interests, to be flattened by the winds of destiny. And the winds never cease. Hitler did not talk in terms of his own lifetime. He talked in terms of "the next thousand years."

Why do nations veer down this path? This was the question Arendt tried to answer. She believed that totalitarianism was a distinctively twentieth-century phenomenon, made possible by the emergence of two social groups, which she named "the mob" and "the masses." The mob is made up of "the refuse of all classes": disempowered aristocrats, disillusioned intellectuals, and gangsters—people deprived of access to mainstream social and political life, and motivated by a politics of resentment. From the mob is drawn the leadership of totalitarian movements. The masses are the troops. Arendt thought that the masses were the product of capitalism's destruction of the class system, and its replacement of the citizen, who is motivated primarily by fellowship, with *Homo economicus*, a figure motivated solely by rational self-interest. But rational self-interest is an inadequate foundation for selfhood. We need the sense of fellowship to sustain the sense of self: relations with others are what give our own lives meaning. Mass man is deracinated, alienated, atomized—a balloon tethered to nothing. He is not a political creature, since politics requires shared interests. He is not really interested even in himself, since his sense of self is so attenuated. He is therefore readily enlisted in movements that preach the annihilation of the individual in the name of a superhuman law.

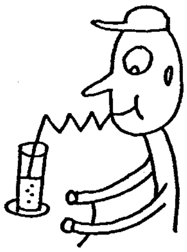
The mysterious part of totalitarianism's appeal—and here we return to the Problem of the Loyal Henchmen—is that its official ideology can be, and usually is, absurd on its face, and known to be absurd by the leaders who preach it. This is because the mob is made up of cynics; for them, everything is a lie anyway. And the masses' hostility is free-floating. It has no concrete object: the masses are hostile to life as it is. The more extreme and outrageous the totalitarian ideology, therefore, and the more devoid of practical political sense, the more ineluctable its appeal. Totalitarian rule, Arendt argued, is predicated on the assumption that proving that a thing is true is less effective than acting as though it were true. The Nazis did not invite a discussion of the merits of anti-Semitism; they simply acted out its consequences. This is why documents like the memorandums for which Alfred Dreyfus was convicted of treason and "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" continued to be believed even after they had been exposed as forgeries, and why the Moscow Trials were defended even by people who knew that the "confessions" were fraudulent. It's why some of the defendants in those trials went uncomplainingly to be executed for crimes they had not committed. And it gives plausibility to the henchman who sacrifices his life to take a final shot at James Bond. Blofeldism, an impossible and megalomaniac belief in world domination, is a perfect parody of Nazism and Stalinism—just as empty and just as deluded, although, thanks to 007, not nearly as deadly.

Totalitarianism, authoritarianism, the mob, and the masses are abstractions, but they do real work in the world. The purpose of Benjamin Alpers' timely book, "Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture" (North Carolina; $19.95), is to enumerate, by surveying political theory, journalism, and popular culture from the nineteen-twenties through the nineteen-fifties, the various uses to which some of these terms have been put. Parts of Alpers' book overlap an earlier study, Abbott Gleason's "Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War" (1995), but Alpers has some fresh sources and some new things to say.

Arendt is sometimes credited as the first person to make the case for equating Fascism and Communism as regimes of the same type, and for refusing to make a moral distinction between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia. She was not the first (and she did not claim that she was), but it is true that, from the nineteen-thirties on, many Western intellectuals insisted on making such a distinction, and were still doing so as late as 1982, the year Susan Sontag scandalized some of them by referring to Communism as "Fascism with a human face." As Alpers shows, the fortunes of the term "totalitarianism," a word coined in the nineteen-twenties to describe Mussolini's regime, were for many years tied to the debate over the true nature of the Soviet Union. Communists never regarded Fascism as a brother regime; one of the worst things you could call someone in Stalin's era was a Fascist, just as the worst thing you could call someone in Hitler's was a Bolshevik (Jewishness was implied in the term). During the period of the Popular Front, from 1935 to 1938, when the Communist Party sought alliances with progressive groups in the name of anti-Fascism, it was therefore unseemly to suggest any similarity between Communism and Fascism as forms of government. This changed abruptly in August, 1939, when the Soviet Union signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany; it changed again in 1941, when Hitler invaded Russia and the Soviet Union became America's ally. And then it changed once more. By the end of the war, people in the American government were referring to Soviet Communism as totalitarianism, and the notion that Communism was the moral equivalent of Fascism was dominant in American official discourse during the first two decades of the Cold War.

Looking at movies and novels of the forties and fifties, though, Alpers makes an interesting observation. In the popular notion of Fascism, all Germans are Fascists; in the popular notion of Soviet Communism, there is a difference between the leadership and the people. Every German, in popular culture, is a closet Nazi; ordinary Russians are closet democrats. Communism is an oppressive ideology. Fascism is a sickness in the soul. The implication is that you can liberate the subjects of a Communist regime, but the subjects of a Fascist regime are incurable. This distinction goes to the question of why people follow authority. Do the loyal henchmen obey the dictator out of fear or out of conviction? When the pistol is no longer pointed at their heads, do they reveal their true identities as liberal pluralists? Or was it the pistol that they loved all along?

People have suggested that the "war on terror" that the United States declared after the attacks of September 11th fills a rhetorical and ideological vacuum left by the end of the Cold War. Once again, the liberal democracies face a global threat. Once again, the world can be divided in two, which is at least a relief to thought, division by two being one of the simplest arithmetical calculations. The analogy between the war on terror and the war against Communism is sound as far as it goes. But this one is, after all, distinctly a hot war. September 11th was widely interpreted as a second Pearl Harbor: it's the Second World War that the United States seems to want to be fighting. And for a number of commentators who support the war—Daniel Pipes, in "Militant Islam Reaches America"; Paul Berman, in "Terror and Liberalism"; Thomas Friedman, in his *Times* columns, collected in "Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11"—the Nazi example is just as relevant.



Then who is the United States "liberating" when it deposes the ruling cliques in Afghanistan and Iraq? People who obeyed out of fear, or people who obeyed out of conviction, or out of partial conviction, or out of hatred for the alternative? In the mid-century literature on totalitarianism and democracy—Erich Fromm's "Escape from Freedom" (1941), Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon" (1941), George Orwell's "1984" (1949), Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.,'s "The Vital Center" (1949), Arendt's "Origins of Totalitarianism"—the key idea is that modern life has produced a new kind of human being: mass man, or, sometimes, totalitarian man. In 1941, *Time* announced "the triumphant emergence of a new human type, totalitarian man—superbly armed, deliberately destructive and dominant." Germany alone didn't produce this type; Russia didn't produce it. Western civilization produced it. Alpers is surely right when he argues that the critique of totalitarianism by writers like Arendt is of a piece with their critique of popular culture, which they attacked as culture manufactured for the mass of unindividuated individuals, atomized beings able to feel alive only in their frenzied response to empty celebrity. A consistent theme in the anti-totalitarian writings of the nineteen-forties and nineteen-fifties is "It can happen here." The sources of Fascism "are in the human soul, not in economics," Lewis Mumford wrote, in 1940. "There is a little bit of the fascist in every one of us, and a good deal in some of us," Max Lerner said. Mass man is not forced to be a Fascist. He wants to be a Fascist.

This construction has returned in the popular phrase "the Arab street." The fictional man on the Arab street has all the features of Arendt's mass man: an outcast from modernity, deprived of access to political and economic goods in his own society, adrift in a secularizing world, utterly credulous of preposterous and impractical doctrines. He believes that the Israelis are responsible for the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, just as the followers of Hitler believed that Jews and Gypsies were non-human. He embraces, in the name of a higher law, a cult of death. But if all this is so, how, exactly, is the Arab street supposed to be turned into Main Street? The promise of Operation Iraqi Freedom was that "the Iraqi people" would embrace American-style political and economic freedoms. The Administration assured the world that the United States—or, rather, coalition forces—would occupy the country only until the Iraqis were able to choose their own government. When initial indications were that the Iraqis were inclined to choose a theocracy, the plans for the occupation quickly changed. Can you force people to be free?

It is an old conundrum. The philosopher Bernard Williams, in an article published in the journal *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, shortly before his death this year, puts the hypothetical case of the happy slave. If a slave wants none of the things that his servitude prevents him from having, is he free? And if he is persuaded by his "liberators" that he does want those things, has he then been made free or has he simply been made into a slave by his liberators? Suicide bombers present the same puzzle. Suicide is voluntary, and implies freedom of choice. But it is hard to understand the actions of suicide bombers without some notion of indoctrination, and if the suicide bombers were indoctrinated then they did not choose freely. Similarly, the instinctive American response to people who demand to live in a theocracy is that those people are not choosing freely—that a genuinely free person would never willingly exchange his lot to live under the thumb of an autocratic priesthood. There is every reason to believe that the great majority of Iraqis living under the regime of Saddam Hussein were not happy slaves. It does not follow that the things they wanted, the things that Saddam and his henchmen prevented them from having, were liberty and democracy as Americans understand them. Should we—do we have a duty to—compel them to live democratically?

Fareed Zakaria thinks that we do have a duty but that we should not be in a rush about it. His argument, in "The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad" (Norton; $24.95), is that liberty and democracy are not identical values. Everyone knows that you can have a liberal autocracy: as long as the ruler permits civil and economic freedoms, a society may be liberal without having a representative form of government. Zakaria's point is that you can also have democracy without liberalism—what he calls "illiberal democracy." He believes that this is an increasingly common political regime. "As of this writing close to half of the 'democratizing' countries in the world are illiberal democracies," he says.

Zakaria is not against democracy. He is against "the democratization of democracy." Although Zakaria's print and television appearances over the past two years may lead readers to assume that his book is about the "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West, most of it is about what Zakaria regards as the excessive respect for pure democracy in the United States—the reliance on polling, the popularity of ballot initiatives, the insistence on making all institutions "answerable to the public." (He somehow neglects to discuss the most obvious counterindication to this trend, the 2000 Presidential elections, in which the man declared the winner by judicial fiat lost the popular vote by a significant margin.)

Still, Zakaria does have some observations about the Middle East. The chief one is that if elections were held in most Arab countries today the resulting societies would be more illiberal, not less. "The [Arab] monarchs are more liberal than the societies over which they reign," as he puts it. In his view, democracy properly appears rather late in the process of democratization. First, you need some degree of prosperity, which Zakaria quantifies as a gross domestic product of between three thousand and six thousand dollars per capita. ("Once rich, democracies become immortal," he adds, not altogether convincingly.) After that, you need a market economy and civil liberties. When these foundations are in place, democracy becomes sustainable. There is some realism in this argument. There is also, perhaps, too much faith in the current notion that illiberal societies can free-market themselves into nice, stable, liberal ones—an approach that the former Soviet Union does not seem to be having much luck with. One feels, too, that liberty and democracy are not so easily pried apart—the one requires something of the other all along the line—and that, in any case, no single formula fits all societies. Sometimes autocracies give way peaceably to democratic regimes, and sometimes bloody revolutions are necessary.

Also, of course, not everyone on the planet, even after having been fully undoctrinated, wants the same social goods. Arab rulers, on the whole, might be said to want capitalism without democracy; Arab people, to all appearances, want democracy, or at least self-government, without capitalism. Conceptions, on both sides, of the desirability of liberalism—cultural pluralism, civil liberties, religious tolerance, separation of powers—seem, by Western standards, limited. One thing we can be fairly confident that people in the Arab world want, since it is what we would want if we were in a comparable position, is not to be told by someone else what to want. It is the threat of outside control that makes terrorists and political strongmen possible. The devil at home is, many times, preferable to the angel from across the seas. Choosing to live with the devil does not change people's DNA, though. If circumstances can make dictatorship attractive, new circumstances can make it hateful. When the war is over and the dictator is deposed, the Nazi and the Baathist have a way of melting into something indistinguishable from the ordinary apolitical citizen. There are frightened people; there are ignorant people; there are angry people. But "totalitarian man" is a myth.

The surest path to the top for a would-be dictator is to assure people that their fate is being determined by strangers, by people who are, in some fundamental way, unlike themselves. Several years ago, Riccardo Orizio, an Italian journalist, began to track down former dictators who are now living in disgrace and largely forgotten, and to interview them. The result, "Talk of the Devil: Encounters with Seven Dictators" (Walker; $22), is fascinating. Orizio's subjects are not just ordinary, run-of-the-mill ex-dictators. They are: Idi Amin, of Uganda, now enjoying life as a guest of the Saudis; Jean-Bédel Bokassa, of the Central African Republic, known to the people of that country as the Ogre of Berengo; Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Soviets' Polish puppet; Nexhmije Hoxha, who (with, until his death, her husband, Enver) ruled Albania for nearly fifty years; Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier, who got run out of Haiti in 1986; Mengitsu Haile Mariam, the Marxist-Leninist dictator of Ethiopia; and Mira Markovic, the wife of Slobodan Milosevic, who is currently on trial in The Hague for crimes against humanity. (Manuel Noriega, from his Florida prison cell, politely declined a meeting, on the ground, as he put it in a letter to Orizio, that he was by no means yet in the category of forgotten dictators. "God," he explained, "has not yet written the last word on MANUEL A. NORIEGA!")

Each ex-dictator is mad in his own way, but what almost all of them insist on, in their interviews with Orizio, is that everything they did—the torture, the starvation, the looting of the nation's wealth, the murder of political opponents—was for the good of their country. The alternatives were chaos, colonization, or slaughter. These men and women were, in their own minds, patriots. They validate John Adams's old warning that "power always thinks it has a great soul." The degree of cognitive dissonance involved in being a person who oppresses people out of love for them is summed up in a poster that Baby Doc Duvalier had put up in Haiti. It read, "I should like to stand before the tribunal of history as the person who irreversibly founded democracy in Haiti." And it was signed "Jean-Claude Duvalier, president-for-life."

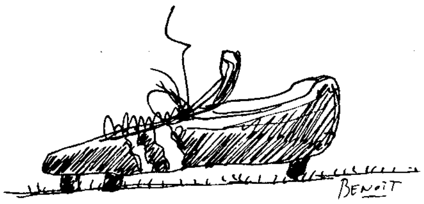
When Orizio asks his dictators about their crimes and excesses—Bokassa and Amin have both been accused of cannibalism—they mostly pass the stories off as the lies of their enemies, but when they do offer an explanation it tends to boil down to what the evil duke says in James Thurber's "The Thirteen Clocks": "We all have flaws, and mine is being wicked." Personal excesses are not the point. The point is that order and autonomy were preserved. Most of them say to Orizio what Saddam Hussein is no doubt saying to whatever loyal henchmen may be remaining to him: Look at my country now! The henchmen are nodding solemnly in agreement. Is it because they agree or because they are afraid not to agree? Possibly they no longer know the difference. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Carlyle's House, *by Virginia Woolf, edited by David Bradshaw (Hesperus/Trafalgar Square; $9.95).* It's easy to mock the Bloomsbury industry, and its latest product—a handful of sketches that Woolf never intended for publication—might seem a particularly vulnerable target: the pieces are not especially memorable, and the foreword (by Doris Lessing) and other critical apparatus are three times the length of the pieces themselves. Yet the friction of Woolf's intelligence as it sparks against the world is always arresting, and the biographical background provided by Bradshaw lends extra fascination. Twenty-seven when she kept this notebook, Woolf had yet to publish a novel or find a husband; her struggle to establish a sense of herself is manifest in these knowing yet tentative observations about family, marriage, and art. By the time you close this modest volume, its proportions seem exactly right.

Flight, *by Victoria Glendinning (St. Martin's; $23.95).* Glendinning is the author of deft biographies of Swift, Trollope, and Elizabeth Bowen, among others, and in this novel she delineates character masterfully. Her protagonist is an aloof English structural engineer whose specialty is glass and whose innovations have made him a celebrity on the international design circuit. But his capacity to bear emotional loads has never been tested until he meets a French socialite whose ancestral château is to become the hotel for an airport he is designing. Glendinning has researched her architecture, and her glass, and she ingeniously explores the theme of responsibility in both work and love, managing to fashion her apparently airy material into a satisfying whole.

Blood and Champagne: The Life and Times of Robert Capa, *by Alex Kershaw (St. Martin's; $25.95).* André Friedmann, a.k.a. Robert Capa, war photographer, bon vivant, and co-founder of Magnum, the legendary photo agency, remains the archetype of the committed photojournalist, risking his life to capture indelible images of the Spanish Civil War, Japan's invasion of China, Second World War battles in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany, and Israel's war for independence. A Hungarian refugee who arrived in Paris in 1933, Capa transformed himself into a charming, caustic adventurer, a high-stakes gambler who left behind a heartbroken trail of beautiful women (including Ingrid Bergman). Kershaw is sympathetic, but by no means blind to his subject's technical, personal, and occasionally ethical limitations, and he conscientiously corrects the romantic embellishments that Capa made to his life story. No matter who tells it, there's a haunting inevitability to the story's end, when, in 1954, Capa finally runs out of luck—at the age of forty, the first American correspondent to die in Indochina.



Thirty Days: Tony Blair and the Test of History, *by Peter Stothard (HarperCollins; $24.95).* Formerly the editor of the London *Times,* Stothard was given access to Tony Blair and his inner circle from the time of the last-minute attempts to get a second U.N. resolution on Iraq until the statues in Baghdad were toppled. Strangely, the closer one gets to Blair the more opaque his motives become, and even those around him seem uncertain whether his policies stem from quasi-religious conviction, shrewd realpolitik, or a simple desire to please. Stothard excels at showing the eccentric world of Downing Street, with its archaic, genteel rituals and sardonic banter (a "Robert Mugabe" is the frostiest possible handshake, reserved for a politician you really abominate; to "Kofi" means to wax idealistic about internationalism). Faced with the overwhelming might of their American allies, the English take refuge in irony: when Blair asks how he should begin a televised speech justifying the war, his right-hand man suggests, "My fellow Americans . . ."

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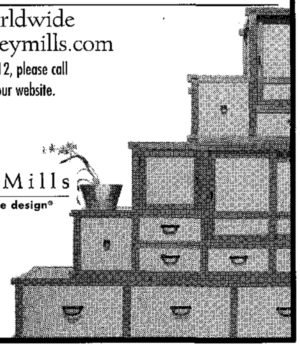

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THE THEATRE

TIME TRIALS

Kingship and kinship in "Henry V" and "Flesh and Blood."

BY JOHN LAHR

"Henry V" (at the Delacorte Theatre, in Central Park, under the lively if uneven direction of Mark Wing-Davey) is Shakespeare's version of three-card monte: what you see is never what you get. What seems, on the surface, a panegyric to the victor of the battle of Agincourt is, in the ironies of its structure and the antitheses of its speech, a cunning commentary on the hypocrisy of political personality.

The prodigal Prince Hal, having ascended the throne, has been born again. "The courses of his youth promised it not," the Archbishop of Canterbury explains in the first scene:

> The breath no sooner left his father's body
> But that his wildness, mortified in him,
> Seemed to die too. . . .
> Never was such a sudden scholar made;
> Never came reformation in a flood
> With such a heady currance, scouring faults.

Now, to consolidate his kingship, Henry V (Liev Schreiber) follows the advice of his dying father in "Henry IV, Part 2"—"Busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels"—and attempts to turn a quarrel with France into a questionable war. For this, Henry needs the public and financial support of the Church; and, despite his fine display of judiciousness, as Shakespeare is at pains to show us through the positioning of scenes, the fix is more or less in.

Dissimulation is the name of Henry V's game, just as it was his father's. In "Henry IV, Part 1," the King lectured his wayward son on the strategy of masquerade: "And then I stole all courtesy from heaven, / And dressed myself in such humility / That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts." In "Henry V," we see how well the son has learned his lessons: Henry is trapped in a perpetual performance of his power, his real personality impossible to locate. For this exemplar of elusive charm and steely willfulness, whose heroic presence is somehow shrouded in solitude, Schreiber is heaven-sent casting. At once compelling and unreachable, he has a swiftness of mind which convinces the audience that language is being coined in the moment. His speech, unlike that of the merely adequate supporting cast, feels lived rather than learned.

Henry V is a protean figure and a persuasive actor. All benevolent civility when he first meets the French Ambassador—"We are no tyrant, but a Christian king," he says—he eventually unleashes the viciousness beneath his suave carapace, toying with the traitors in his midst before dispatching them and spouting bloodthirsty rhetoric at the battlements of Harfleur, where he offers a choice between capitulation and rape. In a show of perfect calm, during his famous St. Crispin's Day speech to the troops, he hides from his men the pre-battle anxieties the audience has witnessed. Of all his manipulations, this turns out to be the greatest. With well-chosen words, Henry sidesteps his soldiers' hunger, exhaustion, and fear (they're outnumbered five to one) and taps directly into their sense of mission. "We . . . shall be remembered— / We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; / For he today that sheds his blood with me / Shall be my brother," he announces, before leading them to victory.

Afterward, as he woos Princess Katherine of France (the kittenish Nicole Leach), an aristocratic hauteur soon replaces the democratic palaver of wartime. "Nice customs curtsy to great kings. . . . We are the makers of manners, Kate," he tells the coy Princess. He

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Liev Schreiber as Henry V.

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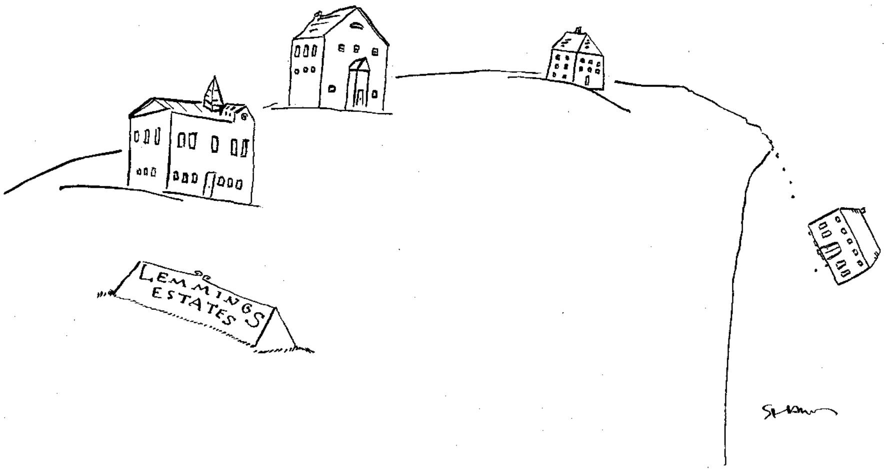

then goes on to act the stumbling lover, "a fellow of plain and uncoined constancy." Henry plays the part with such conviction that for a moment we forget that he's been far from constant to Falstaff, who, during the play, dies heartbroken and nearly unnoticed by Henry, or to his father, whose overthrow and subsequent murder of Richard III he calls "the fault / My father made in compassing the crown." Henry's true voice—a mixture of eloquence, ruthlessness, and cold clinical wit—comes out only in the play's great joke. Katherine asks in her demotic English, "Is it possible dat I sould love de *ennemie* of France?" "In loving me you should love the friend of France," Henry replies, "for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it—I will have it all mine."

At the opening of Peter Gaitens's elegant adaptation of Michael Cunningham's 1995 novel "Flesh and Blood" (at the New York Theatre Workshop), a girl shakes a box containing the cremated remains of her forebears in the Stassos family. "It makes a *noise*," the girl says, at which point the vanished world begins to speak to us—the voices of others who come to represent, in their particularity, all those buried voices we carry forever in our hearts, the ghosts of our fears and sorrows.

This scintillating family saga begins its elegiac trajectory—the play is three hours and twenty minutes long—in 1949, when an eager, provincial sixteen-year-old named Mary (the superb Cherry Jones) decides to marry a burly Greek immigrant, Constantine Stassos (expertly played by John Sierros). Constantine's goodness is at odds with his brutishness. Always slightly misunderstanding or misunderstood, he never quite gets the language or the point of the abundant world he bustles through. Mary projects her ambitions, instead, onto her son, Billy (the compelling Peter Gaitens), the only one of her three children she feels she understands. Constantine, however, favors their elder daughter, Susan (Jessica Hecht), whose competition with her mother tips in her favor as her parents' relationship grows more volatile and aloof over the years. No one's favorite, the youngest child, Zoe (the poignant Martha Plimpton), sees herself for the changeling she is.

In this hothouse of frustrated aspirations and repressed fury, the Stassos children inevitably grow up driven by fierce, unfathomed needs. Billy becomes a homosexual; the well-married Susan dotes obsessively on her child, Ben (Sean Dugan), who is the spitting image of the gardener with whom she had a brief fling. Zoe wanders into promiscuity and drugs. "I used to think I should have . . . some kind of ambition," she says in passing, "so that if people asked me what I was doing I'd have a better answer than, 'I'm doing opium suppositories.'"

The plotlines are deftly crosshatched by the bold narrative construction and by the poised direction of Doug Hughes, who keeps the pace and the poignance clear. Time is the main character here, haunting and bedevilling the family, dealing out hurt and healing in unequal measure. In Act II, Mary, now divorced and living at a distance from her family and from herself, casts a cold eye over the wild card of destiny. "This is what's happening," she says. "I live by myself in a five-bedroom house. My oldest daughter hardly speaks to me. My son loves other men. My youngest child gave birth to an illegitimate half-black baby whose father is God knows where. And I am trying to dress for a lunch with my grandchild's 'godmother'... and I have no idea what to wear because I've never had lunch with a man who wears dresses." The transvestite in question is Cassandra, played by Jeff Weiss, in a high-camp star turn. Weiss, whose performance is both dashing and touching, brings to this collage of voices the pure bright note of frivolity, a refusal to suffer. "Honey," he tells Zoe's son, "the world is full of nothing if not surprises."

The onslaught of time may be brutal, but "Flesh and Blood" has its comic moments. When the lonely Billy finally finds someone to love him—or, as he puts it, to make him "visible"—he is eager to introduce his lover, Harry (Peter Frechette), to his mother. In a scene that goes right to the heart of every parent's emotional ambivalence, Mary pauses to address the audience. "I could tell him it turns my stomach," she says. "I could treat this as a minor distraction and order dessert. I could pay him back. For everything." Then she turns to her son. "Yes," she says. "Yes, of course I want to meet him."

"Flesh and Blood" asks us to see ourselves in a continuum. The enterprise is powerfully mysterious and consoling. It takes years, the play seems to be saying, to wake up, to accept ourselves, to find love, to change. Life can turn on a dime, and there is nothing for it but humor and hope and grit. At the end of the play, Mary, who, of all the characters, has made perhaps the longest emotional journey, observes her gay son, his lover, and her bereaved grandson, whose mother has died of AIDS. "I can love this," she says. "I can try. . . . There's nothing else for me to do. For this is what the living do. Here are the years to come. One hour and then another and another and another and another." She goes on, "This isn't the end. It never is. It's the middle. It's the beginning. It all depends on when you came in and when you have to go." ♦

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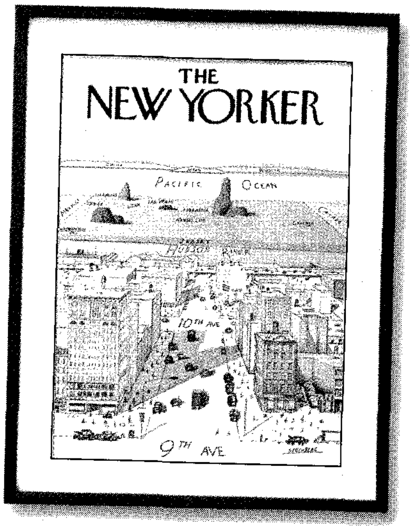

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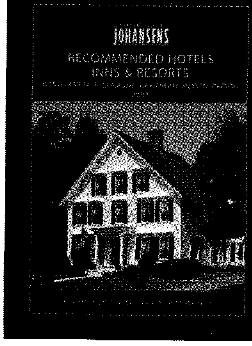

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ON TELEVISION

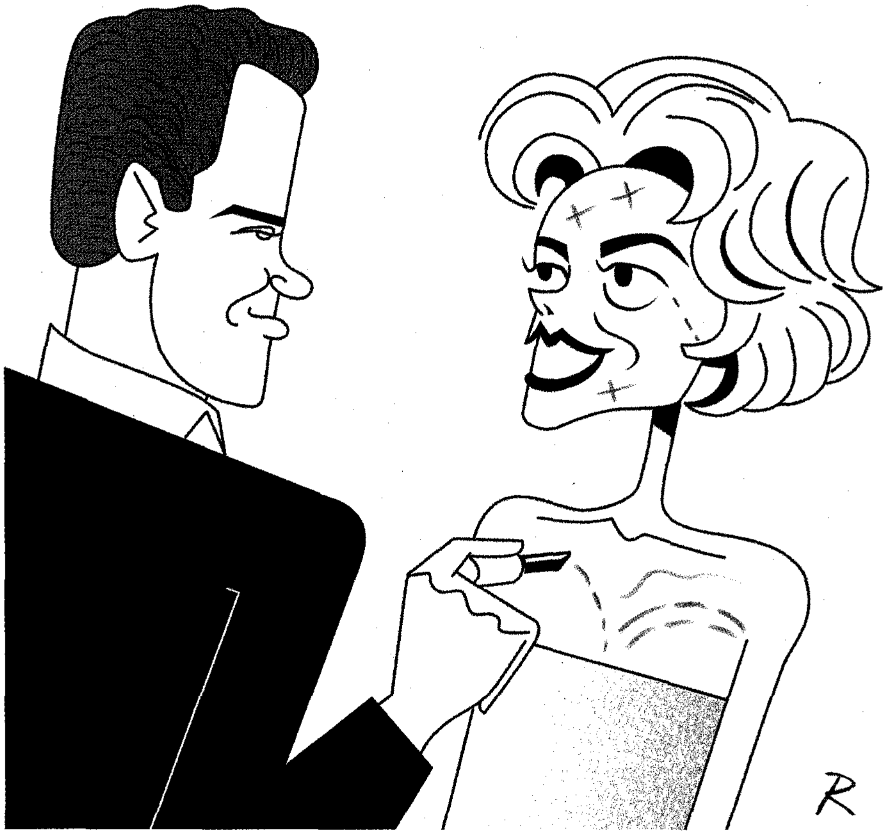
KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

Morals and makeovers on "Nip/Tuck" and "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

For some years now, it has been hard to avoid shows that depict medical procedures in all their gory starkness. You're blithely turning channels, and all of a sudden you come across a complicated, scary birth, or a breast reduction, or an eye being sliced open. Whenever my surfing takes me past the Learning Channel, I'm braced for blood, and ready to recoil at a moment's notice. (Which doesn't mean I don't sometimes stop and gawk, as I did a couple of months ago when I happened upon the Discovery Health Channel as doctors were removing a tumor that weighed almost two hundred pounds from a woman's midsection.) These programs aren't intentionally gruesome, though—they're meant to be inspirational, highlighting medical progress and glorifying the doggedly dedicated surgical teams who work through their exhaustion to produce miracles. The shows are exercises in problem-solving, and they're focussed on the outcome. In contrast, the cosmetic-surgery procedures shown on the new FX drama "Nip/Tuck," which starts this week and centers on the lives of two Miami plastic surgeons, are desperational—what's highlighted here is the violence done to the human body for the sake of vanity. And the doctors, Christian Troy (Julian McMahon) and Sean McNamara (Dylan Walsh), are, alas, all too human, persuading themselves to perform operations they don't fully approve of just because patients want them and they provide a very good living.

The hyperrealism of "Nip/Tuck," which for maximum clarity is shot on 35-mm. film, will not endear it to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, but surgery doesn't take up an undue amount of the show—it just seems that way, because when it does occur it's shockingly brutal. The show is more about the friendship, and the tension, between the partners: Sean, a family man who is beginning to see his life as a moral sinkhole—especially after he turns away a woman whose son has been badly burned and who can't afford to pay for treatment—and Christian, a serial womanizer, with a boat called Boatox, who sees their work as simply a business. Offered thirty thousand dollars in drug money to remake a man's face, Christian balks, citing the dirty money, but when the offer is upped to three hundred thousand he says, "Let's schedule." Sean, we discover later in the first episode, is not immune to such blandishments, either, for all his priggishness, but he, at least, feels a sense of shame.



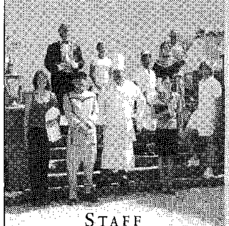
Julian McMahon as Christian Troy plies his trade in "Nip/Tuck."

Added to Sean's uncertainty about how he wants to live his life is his increasingly unsatisfying marriage, which in terms of communication appears to be a throwback to the days of Lucy and Ricky, but without the comedy. (Sexually, Sean and Christian are both in ruts, but very different ones: there is a scene that cuts back and forth between Christian having hot sex with a stranger he has picked up in a bar and Sean in bed with his wife, Julia, played by Joely Richardson, joylessly going through what can only nominally be called the motions, while thinking about firing the gardener. Julia actually yawns during the proceedings.) Julia, who put her own plan to become a doctor on hold in order to help her husband establish his practice, tells Sean that she feels taken for granted. He spits back reproaches about "the life I've given you" and accuses her of doing nothing all day. And, in fact, Julia's deferral of her dream may have made her unfit for it: she's nervous and twitchy, and full of rage.

One of the threads running through "Nip/Tuck" is Christian's longtime ardor for Julia—an old home movie we see Julia watching tells us that the three principals go way back together. (And we can't help noticing that Sean and Julia's teen-age son looks more like Christian than like either of his parents. Hmm.) But the real undercurrent of the drama is the tyranny of appearances and the questionable morality of making a living by taking advantage of people's anxieties. "When you stop striving for perfection, you might as well be dead," Christian tells a model whom he has almost reduced to tears by marking up her face and body with a lipstick to show how he would improve her already good looks. (A brief, not fully explained flashback to Christian's childhood in the first episode indicates that there is something sad in his past, and one senses that quite soon we will be asked to forgive him for being a pig.) So far, Sean and Christian are not helping cancer patients or correcting true disfigurement, and even Sean's idea of pro-bono work is to repair a breast augmentation that was ruined when the patient's boyfriend slammed her into a wall.

Ryan Murphy, who created "Nip/Tuck," was also a co-creator, a few seasons back, of the teen satire "Popular," which examined, at the high-school level, the horror of having to live up to conventional standards of beauty. An overweight girl was dismissed as "eyesore candy," and "Gwynethness" was prized above all other values. Murphy has a bee in his bonnet about the superficiality that stains American society, and you can't exactly blame him. But in a drama about cosmetic surgery you have to take into account the many people who feel, quite passionately, that they've been given a new lease on life by what others would call unnecessary operations. (This is the promise—a whole new you—of ABC's "Extreme Makeover," which goes way too far in the other direction, breezily ignoring any issues raised by subsidizing the cutting up of housewives who look as if all they really need is a vacation. A recent ABC press release crows about giving participants "a truly Cinderella-like experience by changing their looks completely in an effort to transform their lives and destinies, and to make their dreams come true." Apparently, glass slippers and a prince don't cut the mustard anymore.) There is room for ambivalence in a drama on this subject, and, even if you share "Nip/Tuck" 's dim view of Sean and Christian's practice, you can't help wishing the show had more subtlety and didn't come running at you like Carry Nation with a broken bottle. Instead of getting under your skin with the discerning touch implied in its title, the show takes an approach to its subject that is strictly slash-and-burn.

"Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," a new makeover show on Bravo, has received a lot of attention for the way it both flaunts and flouts stereotypes (and for the fact that the first episode, last week, got a higher rating than any other show on Bravo ever has). Five gay men, each with expertise in areas that gay men are "famous" for knowing about—grooming, interior design, fashion, food and wine, and cultural knowingness—come barging in on a frumpy heterosexual man, who, instead of making fun of them or imitating the way they walk, welcomes them into his home and eagerly follows their every word of advice. But the appeal of "Queer Eye" has nothing to do with stereotypes (except in the case of the hilariously epigrammatic fashion expert, Carson Kressley, who performs his brand of cosmetic surgery with a verbal scalpel and makes "Will & Grace" 's Jack seem as stately and self-contained as John Wayne). It has to do with the way the show fulfills a desire that has come to be almost forbidden in our culture: the desire to be taken care of. The two straight guys in the first two episodes need help—their homes are a cluttered mess, they're unkempt, and they haven't a clue about how to change—and help is what they get. The Fab 5 (as the license plate on their S.U.V. calls them) are frank but nonjudgmental and very funny about what they see when they walk in; there's not a hint of punitiveness in their ministrations, as there is in, say, the British fashion-makeover series "What Not to Wear," which puts more emphasis on the first word in "tough love." To a great extent, the "Queer Eye" five work with available materials—the furniture that's already there, and some of the clothes—adding a new sparkle to the guy's comfort zone and showing him how to become a spiffier, more attractive version of the person he already is. Instead of making him feel ashamed of his bad habits, they storm his domestic prison with humor and set him free into a new life, giving him the know-how to make him competent and confident. Perhaps the most thrilling aspect of their house calls—and anyone who has ever hired contractors, whose professional code apparently requires them to disappear from a job when it is ninety-seven per cent finished, may weep at this—is that they stay until everything is done. Hey, boys—come up and see me sometime. ♦



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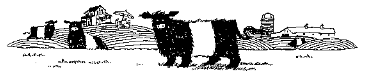

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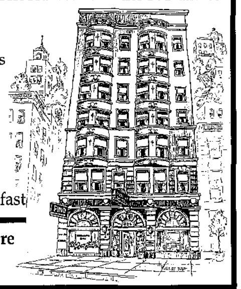

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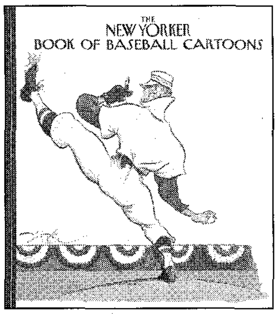

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

HIGH SEAS

"Pirates of the Caribbean" and "The Housekeeper."

BY DAVID DENBY

What, I wonder, would the great swordsman Errol Flynn have made of Johnny Depp's fey, capering performance in "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl"? As Jack Sparrow, the deposed pirate captain of the Black Pearl, Depp does not so much walk as sashay into a scene, and his center of gravity seems to have risen somewhere close to his Adam's apple—Jack is a man who can't find his land legs. Depp speaks in a rich, deep, but frequently inaudible islands gurgle, his skin is a lacquered bronze, and he has two braided beard strands, like a Chinese sage. In most of the scenes, he wears more eye shadow than Tammy Faye Bakker. Part buffoon, part wandering, improvising liar—a sort of rum-soaked Odysseus who has no Ithaca to go home to—Depp's Captain Jack gives this family picture an amiable sheen of silliness (his performance has diverse echoes of W. C. Fields, Toshiro Mifune, and Keith Richards on a bender). The old buccaneer movies, with their dashing heroes and their ladies whose bosoms swelled like the seven seas, were often close to parody, but none of them offered anything as juicily ridiculous as Depp's popinjay pirate—a strange private joke on display in the middle of a hundred-and-twenty-five-million-dollar Jerry Bruckheimer production.

Depp performs on his own wavelength. He's more of a teasing adornment than a necessity to the story; he leaves a lot of the duelling and all of the lovemaking to Orlando Bloom (from "The Lord of the Rings"), who actually looks a little like Flynn, lucky boy. Bloom plays the young blacksmith William Turner, who, as a child, was saved from the sea by little Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley), the daughter of the British governor of a Caribbean colony. Now grown up, Elizabeth is bold and independent. She's one of those fiery types who is attracted to pirates, a Gilbert and Sullivan peculiarity that the moviemakers manage to forget at potentially awkward moments, such as when she falls into the hands of a bunch of scurvy dogs who do little more than gape, say "Arrgh!" and other pirate things, and then make her walk the plank. But, like children in a fairy tale, she and William are fated to be lovers, for William has pirate blood in his veins—he just doesn't know it.

The fanciful romance is only one part of a gratifyingly full-scale production. The movie, of course, is based on the famous Disneyland ride, which I first enjoyed sometime around 1902, and the film incorporates elements of the ride itself—a noisy visit to Tortuga, for instance, with drunkards tumbling from balconies and strumpets smacking men in the face. "Pirates" is rich in cheesy good humor; it's not just about a ride, it's about an irresistibly overripe movie genre that has fallen into disuse. There are tall ships, battles on the open sea, a port city with fortifications and ramparts, and dozens of British soldiers running about and falling over like turkeys whenever anyone shoots in their direction. As Barbossa, the pirate who deposed Captain Jack, Geoffrey Rush draws back his head, eyeballs his victims, and stretches out his syllables in the taunting manner of Robert Newton, who specialized in growling,

The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 17 & 24, Apr. 21 & 28, June 16 & 23, July 14 & 21, Aug. 18 & 25, Dec. 22 & 29) by The Condé Nast Publications Inc. (4 Times Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10036-6592), which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc. Vol. LXXIX, No. 20, July 28, 2003. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office.
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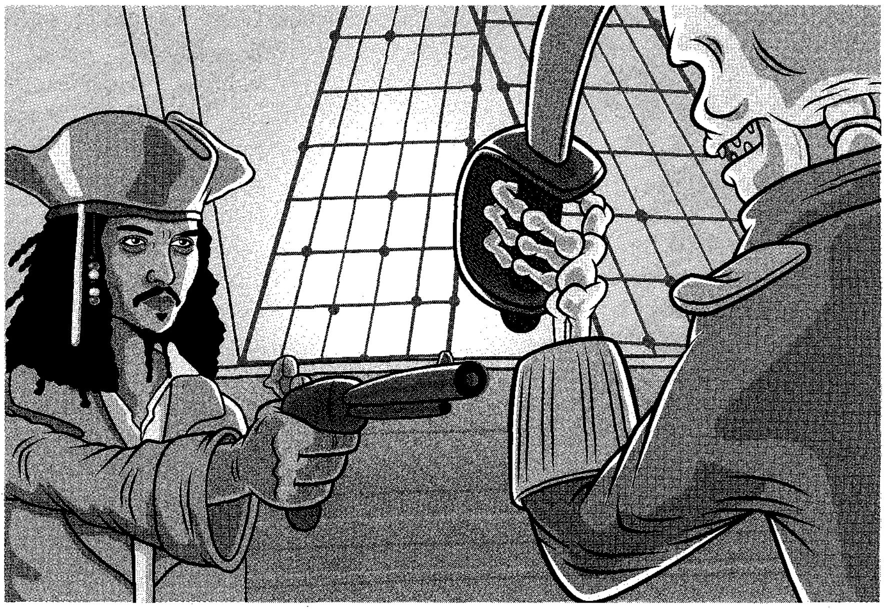
stump-legged scoundrels fifty years ago. There is also a redundant, semi-garbled plot about Aztec gold and a cursed ghost ship—the Black Pearl—emerging from a swirling fog. The pirates on board, whom William and Captain Jack must fight, are both immortal and insensible (they can't feel anything), and they turn into skeletons in the moonlight and go on rampages. None of the supernatural stuff makes much sense, but it allows the director, Gore Verbinski, and his digital workers to indulge a taste for the ghoulish, the hexed, the outré, and the weirdly melancholic—the cursed pirates wither and lose their flesh, only to regain it when they step indoors or when daylight returns. Even Depp goes ghostly at one point, but the digitized effects are too weightless for us to feel anything like horror.

Jerry Bruckheimer has finally begun to produce something better than junk. "Black Hawk Down," one of his films from 2001, was a first-rate war movie, and this loose-jointed entertainment has many lovably eccentric moments. All in all, "Pirates of the Caribbean" is the best spectacle of the summer: the absence of pomp is a relief, the warmth of the comedy a pleasure. The screenwriter Terry Rossio can perhaps be forgiven for saying (in the press notes), "We wanted it to be a very classic, Jane Austen-style, bodice-ripping romance." (Rossio is probably thinking of Austen's most famous work, "Pride and Pimpernel.") As it turned out, the bodices remain unripped, but Rossio and his colleagues Ted Elliott, Stuart Beattie, and Jay Wolpert have created such enjoyable bits as a pair of overly literal Cockney soldiers who engage in long, bizarrely pointless dialogues, and a matching pair of pirate clowns, one of whom has a glass eye that keeps falling out. Verbinski's talent for comic action scenes has improved immeasurably since "The Mexican," his disastrous fumble of two years ago, with Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts. That movie ran off in a hundred directions; this one is pretty consistently funny. I want in particular to praise the dental-makeup specialist or whoever it was who produced the mouthfuls of hideously blackened teeth and inflamed gums. Parents can justify the price of the movie ticket in the most practical way: after one look at the rotting stumps, children may be more than eager to visit the family dentist.

Jacques (Jean-Pierre Bacri), the fiftyish sound engineer at the center of Claude Berri's "The Housekeeper," has almost withdrawn from life. Six months earlier, Jacques's wife left him, and, still stunned, he clings desperately to the pillows in his Paris apartment. When he isn't working, he is lost, an intelligent but dry-souled man too disgusted with everything even to read a book. Bacri, a superb actor, is a master of the many shades of half-interest and sullen boredom. His expression asks, "What's the point?" He calls up a woman who advertises for work as a housekeeper and is astonished when she turns out to be young, pretty, and eager to please. Quickly, Laura (Émilie Dequenne), who is perhaps nineteen or twenty, takes over not only Jacques's mop and broom but his entire apartment. She moves in and eventually climbs into bed with him, even though he doesn't much want her. In these early stretches of the movie, Berri's experience shows up in his patient refusal to force the situation. For a long time, he devotes himself to creating the tentative steps, the awkwardness and hesitations. The sexual encounter, when it happens, is no big deal. The skies do not light up: Jacques, we realize, is a bit of a sourpuss, and Laura is rather bovine and undiscriminating, though shrewd enough when it comes to manipulating her grouchy employer. Neither of them could be described as lively, and, after a while, we realize that that's the point. The movie, based on a novel by Christian Oster, is a study in limited consciousness. To Jacques's amazement, however, Laura falls in love with him—or says she's in love—and slowly he begins to wake up.


Johnny Depp battles a cursed pirate in Gore Verbinski's new movie.

The movie shifts to the Brittany coast, where Jacques takes Laura for a vacation, and, out of Paris and no longer a housekeeper, she becomes a lot less pliant. Suddenly, the enormous difference in the lovers' ages begins to matter. She wants to go dancing, to go to the beach, but Jacques, now eager to read, and self-conscious about his body, hates the sun and the coldness of the sea. This girl is both not enough and too much for him—or, at least, too much of the wrong thing. Berri keeps the story small, tart, and extremely matter-of-fact. The movie doesn't have the surprises or the cruelty of art—it's no more than a gentle echo of the great tragic farces about an aging male lover who tries to hold on to a young woman. But "The Housekeeper" is observant and true. The pleasure of it lies not in its emotions, which are distinctly on the tepid side, but in the intimacy of its reporting. When Jacques finally plunges into the water, he gets a cramp, and he knows that this particular season as a lover is over. The movie leaves open the question of whether a new season is about to begin. ♦

CASUAL

STRUNG OUT

BY WOODY ALLEN

I am greatly relieved that the universe is finally explainable. I was beginning to think it was me. As it turns out, physics, like a grating relative, has all the answers. The big bang, black holes, and the primordial soup turn up every Tuesday in the Science section of the *Times*, and as a result my grasp of general relativity and quantum mechanics now equals Einstein's—Einstein Moomjy, that is, the rug seller. How could I not have known that there are little things the size of "Planck length" in the universe, which are a millionth of a billionth of a billionth of a billionth of a centimetre? Imagine if you dropped one in a dark theatre how hard it would be to find. And how does gravity work? And if it were to cease suddenly would certain restaurants still require a jacket? What I do know about physics is that to a man standing on the shore time passes quicker than to a man on a boat—especially if the man on the boat is with his wife. The latest miracle of physics is string theory, which has been heralded as a T.O.E., or "Theory of Everything." This may even include the incident of last week herewith described.

I awoke on Friday and because the universe is expanding it took me longer than usual to find my robe. This made me late leaving for work, and because the concept of up and down is relative the elevator I got into went to the roof, where it was very difficult to hail a taxi. Please keep in mind that a man on a rocket ship approaching the speed of light would have seemed on time for work—or perhaps even a little early and certainly better dressed. When I finally got to the office and approached my employer Mr. Muchnick to explain the delay, my mass increased the closer I came to him, which he took as a sign of insubordination. There was some rather bitter talk of docking my pay, which, when measured against the speed of light, is very small anyhow. The truth is that compared to the amount of atoms in the Andromeda Galaxy I actually earn quite little. I tried to tell this to Mr. Muchnick, who said I was not taking into account that time and space were the same thing. He swore that if that situation should change he would give me a raise. I pointed out that since time and space are the same thing, and it takes three hours to do something that turns out to be less than six inches long, it can't sell for more than five dollars. The one good thing about space being the same as time is that if you travel to the outer reaches of the universe and the voyage takes three thousand earth years, your friends will be dead when you come back, but you will not need Botox.

Back in my office, with the sunlight streaming through the window, I thought to myself that if our great golden star suddenly exploded this planet would fly out of orbit and hurtle through infinity forever—another good reason to always carry a cell phone. On the other hand, if I could someday go faster than a hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second and recapture the light born centuries ago, could I then go back in time to ancient Egypt or Imperial Rome? But what would I do there: I hardly knew anybody. It was at this moment that our new secretary, Miss Lola Kelly, walked in. Now, in the debate over whether everything is made up of particles or waves Miss Kelly is definitely waves. You can tell she's waves every time she walks to the water cooler. Not that she doesn't have good particles but it's the waves that get her the trinkets from Tiffany's. My wife is more waves than particles, too, it's just that her waves have begun to sag a little. Or maybe the problem is that my wife has too many quarks. The truth is, lately she looks as if she had passed too close to the event horizon of a black hole and some of her—not all of her by any means—was sucked in. It gives her a kind of funny shape, which I'm hoping will be correctable by cold fusion. My advice to anyone has always been to avoid black holes because, once inside, it's extremely hard to climb out and still retain one's ear for music. If, by chance, you do fall all the way through a black hole and emerge from the other side, you'll probably live your entire life over and over but will be too compressed to go out and meet girls.

And so I approached Miss Kelly's gravitational field and could feel my strings vibrating. All I knew was that I wanted to wrap my weak-gauge bosons around her gluons, slip through a wormhole, and do some quantum tunnelling. It was at this point that I was rendered impotent by Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. How could I act if I couldn't determine her exact position and velocity? And what if I should suddenly cause a singularity; that is, a devastating rupture in space-time? They're so noisy. Everyone would look up and I'd be embarrassed in front of Miss Kelly. Ah, but the woman has such good dark energy. Dark energy, though hypothetical, has always been a turn-on for me, especially in a female who has an overbite. I fantasized that if I could only get her into a particle accelerator for five minutes with a bottle of Château Lafite I'd be standing next to her, with our quanta approximating the speed of light and her nucleus colliding with mine. Of course, exactly at this moment I got a piece of antimatter in my eye and had to find a Q-tip to remove it. I had all but lost hope when she turned toward me and spoke.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I was about to order some coffee and Danish but now I can't seem to remember the Schrödinger equation. Isn't that silly? It's just slipped my mind."

"Evolution of probability waves," I said. "And if you're ordering I'd love an English muffin with muons and tea."

"My pleasure," she said, smiling coquettishly and curling up into a Calabi-Yau shape. I could feel my coupling constant invade her weak field as I pressed my lips to her wet neutrinos. Apparently I achieved some kind of fission, because the next thing I knew I was picking myself up off the floor with a mouse on my eye the size of a supernova.

I guess physics can explain everything except the softer sex, although I told my wife I got the shiner because the universe was contracting, not expanding, and I just wasn't paying attention. ♦

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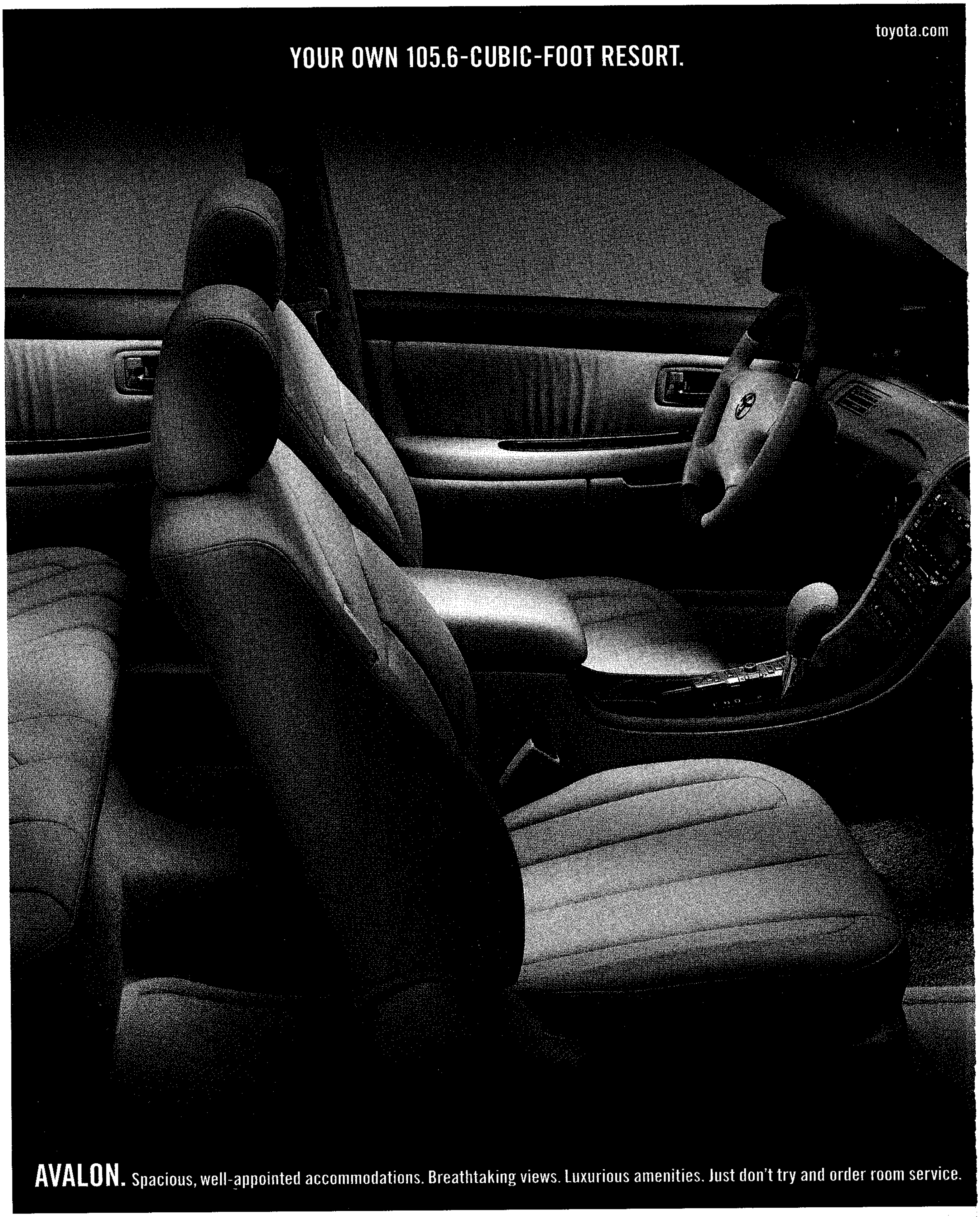
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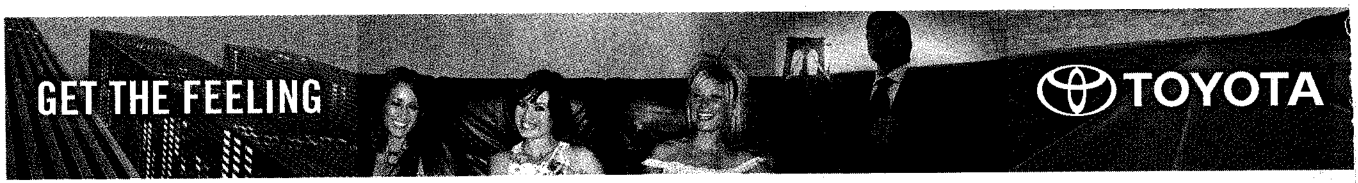
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